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# COMIC ARTIST

VOLUME 3

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Comic Artist is a special edition of ImagineFX, the only magazine dedicated to digital fantasy art. Our aim is to help artists improve their art skills!

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## WELCOME...

... to yet another cracking Comic Artist collection – the third volume, to be exact! It's packed with stunning pieces of art to inspire you, pro artist Q&As filled with tips and tricks to help you improve your own art, features and interviews to learn from, and in-depth step-by-step workshops to work along with, accompanied by exclusive videos to follow, free custom brushes to try out, and much more. And with Thor, Black Panther and Harley Quinn leading the charge in this volume, it's a really special release!

Whether you're familiar with the industry standard software Photoshop, or you want to take your first steps in an affordable alternative with SketchBook Pro, this volume has plenty to get you started. And with expert tips on narrative and depicting character in your art, there's never been a better guide for everyone interested in the art of creating comics. Enjoy, and start creating comics!

A stylized, handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Beren".

Beren Neale, Editor  
[beren.neale@futurenet.com](mailto:beren.neale@futurenet.com)





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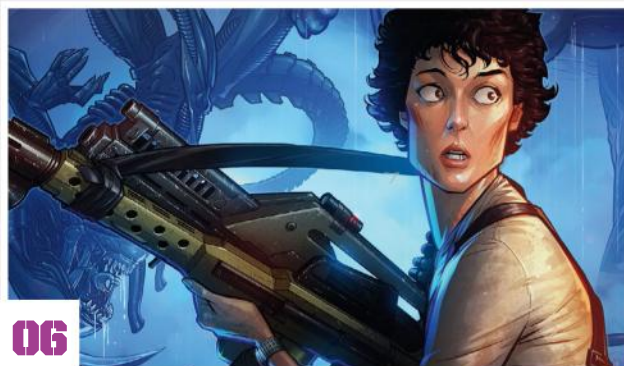
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How-to video tutorials, custom brushes and more! See page 146





# COMIC ARTIST GALLERY

## Jerome Walford

**LOCATION:** US

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop, Illustrator, Poser

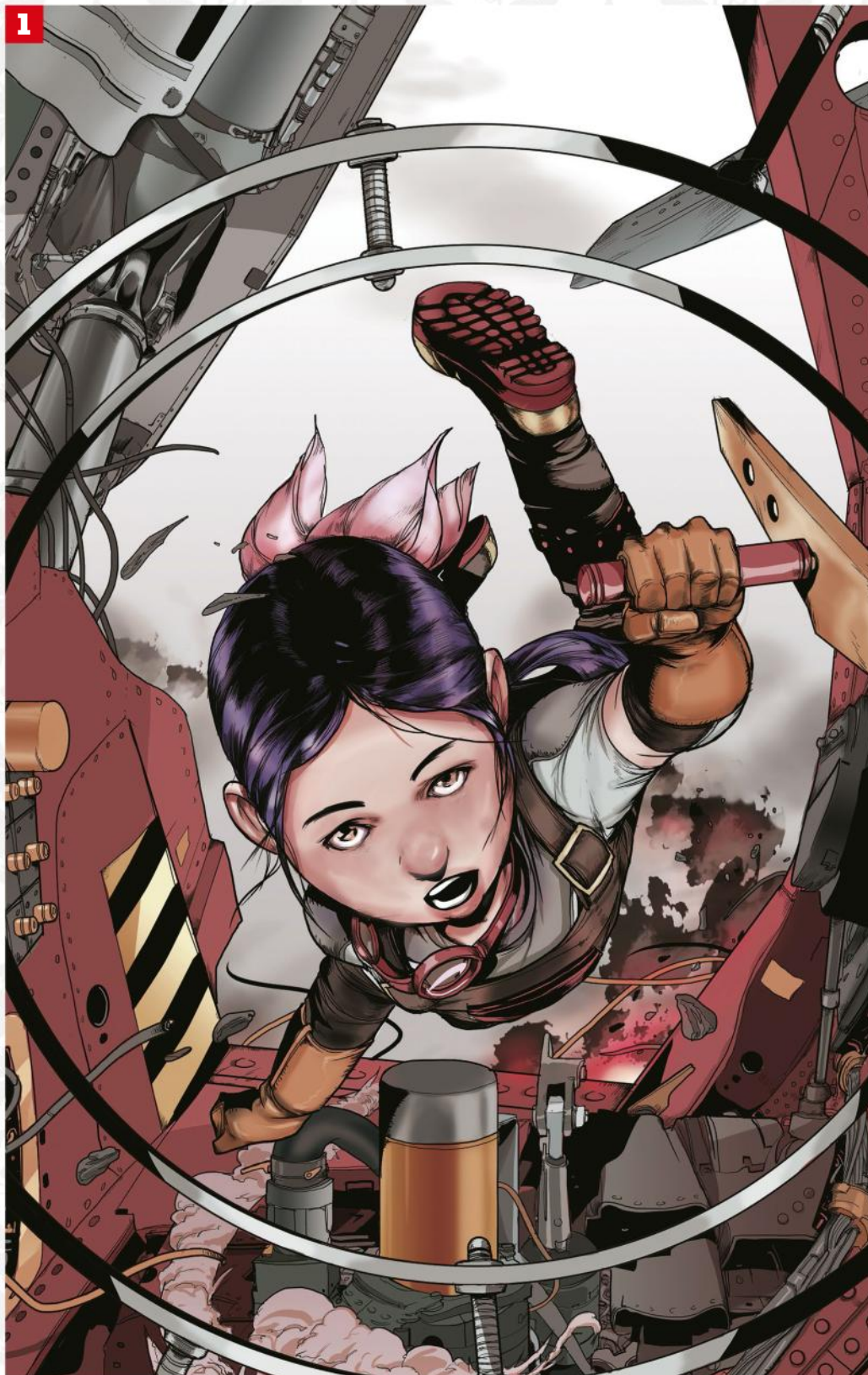


Jamaican-born Jerome moved on from a kid drawing crayons on the kitchen floor to study art in high school and then college. However, it's only recently that the artist has rediscovered his passion for illustration.

"Manga has been one of my consistent influences," he reveals. "I really love intricate line work, and disciplined colour application. Or perhaps it's just my subconscious from when was a kid."

**1 MOON HANGS ON** "This is the cover to Moon's Ostrich, published by Forward Comix. It features a young girl who goes on wild and crazy adventures in a steampunk world. I tried to imagine the most dangerous situation: attempting to board an airship as it was rocketing into the air."

**2 TORCHING OF THE ART HOUSE OF CRANES** "I wanted to do more studies looking at the connection between the arts, cultural diversity and industrialisation. This sparked the idea about a fashion icon, caught in the middle of a time of unrest. I really like this illustration."





## ARTIST CRIT

Fiona Staples, the artist behind the epic comic *Saga*, acknowledges Jerome's character work...



"I love Jerome's line work in both artworks. And while there's a lot going on in *Moon Hangs On*, the muted palette and the precision of the colouring bring everything into clarity."





1





## Nadia Enis

**LOCATION:** Germany

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**EMAIL:** [ideas@nadiaenis.com](mailto:ideas@nadiaenis.com)

**MEDIA:** Photoshop



The self-taught artist has worked for hire since 2008, which for the past five years has mainly been in the games industry, a field in which she also teaches.

"I've varied my style a lot in my career, fitting to briefings or target groups, and it never bothered me until recently," Nadia says. "Last year I felt the need to find my own home and decorate it. So I started a search for a visual language that can describe how I see the world.

"I'm still searching for my voice, or for the story that I want to tell. I've already found my personal guide, though. It seems to be humour."

Nadia is influenced by artists whose illustrations are windows into their inner world, such as the surreal power of Sergey Kolesov and the gentle elegance of Adam Tan.

© Paizo

2



**1 5TH ELEMENT** "This illustration was done for a fan-based artbook, which was successfully funded on Kickstarter. I wanted to try out a new mix of styles."

**2 PATHFINDER** "I was more than happy when Paizo commissioned me for half-orc characters, especially as they were women warriors. I'm weirdly attracted to this combination and had a lot of fun doing those. I grew fond of this lady in particular."

**3 JINX** "I started drawing in the manga style and even though I tend to be far away from it nowadays, sometimes I like to go back and visit this old friend of mine. Especially when doing fan art like this."

3



## COMIC ARTIST CRIT



"Nadia has a distinctive style and an eye for intriguing and unique characters – from heroes to robots! Her designs lend themselves to everything from animation to game concept art. She's certainly one to watch."

**Alice Pattillo,**  
Staff Writer



1

## AJ Frena

LOCATION: US

WEB: [www.aj-frena.com](http://www.aj-frena.com)

EMAIL: [mail@aj-frena.com](mailto:mail@aj-frena.com)

MEDIA: Acrylic, watercolour, Photoshop



AJ's main focus is on imagery that features animals and various forms of wildlife. "Utilising both traditional and digital media, I combine realism with the abstract and fine art with elements of pop culture," the artist says.

Born and raised in North Texas, AJ studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York City before moving to Pittsburgh, PA, where he lives with a lucky black cat and a lazy border collie.

## ARTIST CRIT

It's thumbs up from Dinotopia artist and author James Gurney



"Super stuff, AJ! I love the unlikely heroes climbing on the heap of faded rubble. You rang my bell with the faded paint, the muted colours, the rich details and the sly pop-culture references in all of your works."

### 1 PLEASE STAND BY - FALLOUT 4

"This is a tribute to Fallout for New York Comic Con, celebrating the release of the new game. It's one of my favourite game series and so it was exciting to get the chance to bring this piece to life."

**2 AVENGERS** "A tribute to the release of Avengers: Age of Ultron, in partnership with Marvel for Hero Complex Gallery. This was my first officially licensed piece. At the time I had done scientific illustration almost exclusively, so this was uncharted territory for me. Fortunately, it ended up being a success and opened up new opportunities for me."

**3 NEAR THE CAMPHOR TREE** "This is my tribute to Hayao Miyazaki's 1988 film My Neighbor Totoro. I used acrylic and Photoshop to paint the scene."

**4 WIZARD OF OZ** "When I was asked to do this piece for New York Comic Con, I knew I wanted to tackle the books instead of the film. Dorothy is based on the likeness of a kid that I watched grow up, who I've persuaded into wanting to be an artist. Hearing that she recognised herself immediately in the image and got all excited about it still makes me smile."





2



3



4





## + Abigail Harding

LOCATION: England

WEB: [abz-j-harding.deviantart.com](http://abz-j-harding.deviantart.com)

EMAIL: [abi\\_120@live.co.uk](mailto:abi_120@live.co.uk)

MEDIA: Mixed media



"My work has macabre, fantasy and sci-fi elements," says Abigail, who has always found art an important means of communication: "I like to experiment, work with multiple mediums, learn more about them, test myself and the concepts I have in mind," she says.

Abigail likes to create emotional platforms and stories in her work full of symbolic influences. "They are chaotic, dark, macabre, dreamy. I draw out emotional intensity in my subjects, the passion I feel. I depict them in a warped elegance." An avid comics reader, Abigail loves the marriage between literature and art this medium offers. "It's something that really helps me tell the stories in my own work. And listening to music helps me with building atmosphere."

### 1 HE PEERED LONGINGLY

Ink on Bristol board, 11 x 17in

"He peered longingly, his possessiveness and instinct wanting her. His humanity remembered love, yet now she was need, and want, and desire... A friend and I collaborated together on some writing that later inspired me to draw this piece and colour it in Photoshop. I wanted to capture the raw emotion of the moment between these two characters."

### 2 DOCTOR STRANGE

Printer ink, acrylics, drawing ink on photo matt paper, 8.5 x 11.75in

"This was a happy accident. The printing went wrong, and I reused the page for this painting. It was chaos, and depicts as much."





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# COMIC ARTIST CRIT



"As happy accidents go, turning a printer mishap into a piece of art is pretty neat, and demonstrates Abigail's technical abilities and determination to create great-looking, textured art."

**Alice Pattillo,**  
Staff Writer









## COMIC ARTIST CRIT



"I love Sergio's whimsical approach to comic art. His film influences ensure a story is told with every image, and his dynamic use of shapes and colours demonstrates a keen eye for composition."

**Alice Pattillo,**  
Staff Writer



## ■ Sergio Mancinelli

**LOCATION:** Italy

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop



Sergio attended the Italian Comix School in Naples for four years, where he was influenced by the world of comics, and he incorporates the main techniques into his illustrations.

"I think that even with a single illustration one has to keep in mind the whole story behind it to give a greater impact and show that it's alive in its own world," says the young artist.

His main influences are films. "I often ask myself what lead the director chooses for specific frames and what they wanted to convey with them - to understand how to use it in my works."

He's especially passionate about animation, where he finds features such as dynamism, simple yet powerful shapes and emotional chromatic choices really interesting.

**1 ROBOT U.345** "One of the recurrent themes in my work is cyberpunk, and I prefer to depict it with less realism and more of a cartoonish style, to contrast the classical standard of the genre."

**2 PIER** "Before I start a drawing I spend some time on the composition, structuring it with simple geometrical shapes. Here the picture has a rhomboidal base, to give more dynamism and lead the eye to the focal points, along with chromatic contrast to emphasise the subject."

**3 SPACE DOG** "Here I wanted to tell the story behind the character with a single illustration that clearly shows their attitude. To fix the basic shapes I played with the components of a Volkswagen Beetle, applying them to the cabin, in order to convey the retro-futuristic appearance."



## Patrick Brown

**LOCATION:** Australia

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop, Clip Studio Paint



Taking inspiration from games, movies and even television, Patrick says his favourite artists include Humberto Ramos and Ryan Ottley. "I'm best known for my fan art," he says. "I find it gives me a great reason to draw. With every picture that I produce, I learn more."

Patrick has made a name for himself with his action-packed comic style fan art, scoring cover features in PlayStation magazines and working for games companies such as Naughty Dog, IO Interactive and even Sony. His work also caught the attention of Marvel Comics, enabling him to quit his job as a graphic designer to become a full-time artist.

**1 MARVEL VILLAINS** "I came up with the idea of having all the villains from the Marvel movies of the past 10 years, all hanging out at a certain bar together, Stan's bar to be exact."

**2 GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY** "This piece is my lifesaver. Since I released it in August 2014, it caught the attention of director James Gunn, who made the Guardians of the Galaxy blockbuster film, and also it brought me my Marvel career, which I've been working at for the past eight months."

**3 ALIENS** "As a big fan of the Alien movies I felt the urge to do a piece dedicated to Aliens, showing Ripley in her bravest moment. I had a blast doing this, and learnt a few good tricks with lighting along the way."



© Marvel



© Marvel





© 20th Century Fox

## ARTIST CRIT

Loopydave raises a toast to Patrick's kinetic, colourful art



"Not only does Patrick have a knack for dynamic figures and layout but he helps tell his story with engaging facial expressions as well. Pieces like his Marvel Villains image are full of those little extras that bring you back for another look."



## Josan Gonzalez

**LOCATION:** Spain

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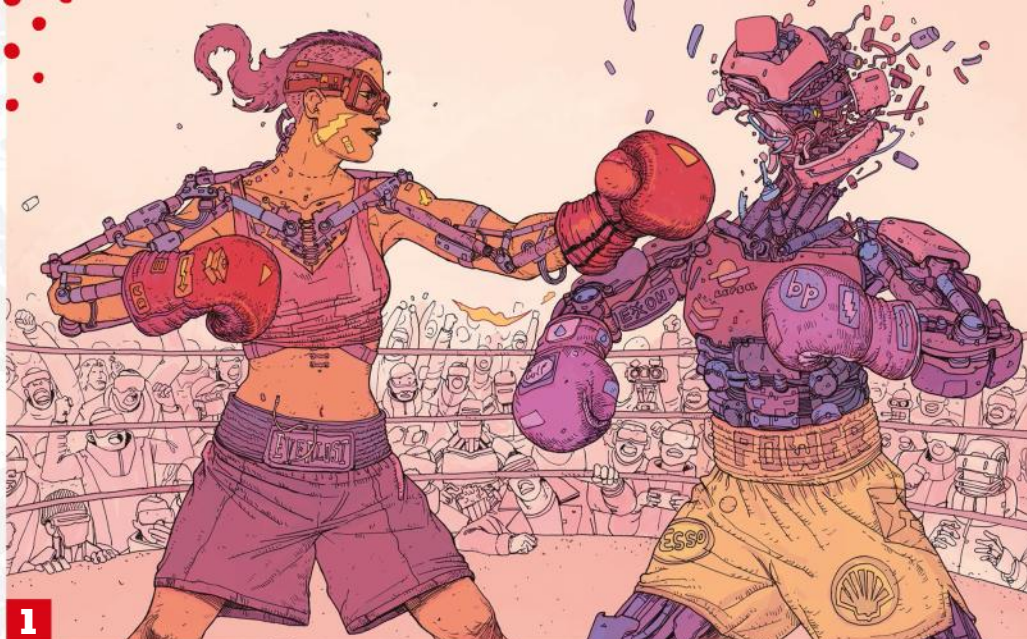
**EMAIL:** [hellou@fsix.es](mailto:hellou@fsix.es)

**MEDIA:** Photoshop and traditional media



Josan was a fashion illustrator until he decided to explore comic art. Since turning freelance he's worked for Dark Horse, Boom!, Dynamite, Games Magazine and Agat Films & Cie among others, as a comic colourist and cover artist. In 2015 he released his first self-published artbook.

"In it I explore a vision of a near future plagued by technology and over-the-top situations," he says, "as well as complex mechanical inventions and crazy character designs." An obsession for detail and rich colour palettes have become the hallmarks of his style.



**1 DEMANUFACTURE** "The match of the century: can a human win against a machine? The woman gets a bit of help from an exoskeleton to even things up. Doesn't look too good so far for the corporate-sponsored fighter..."

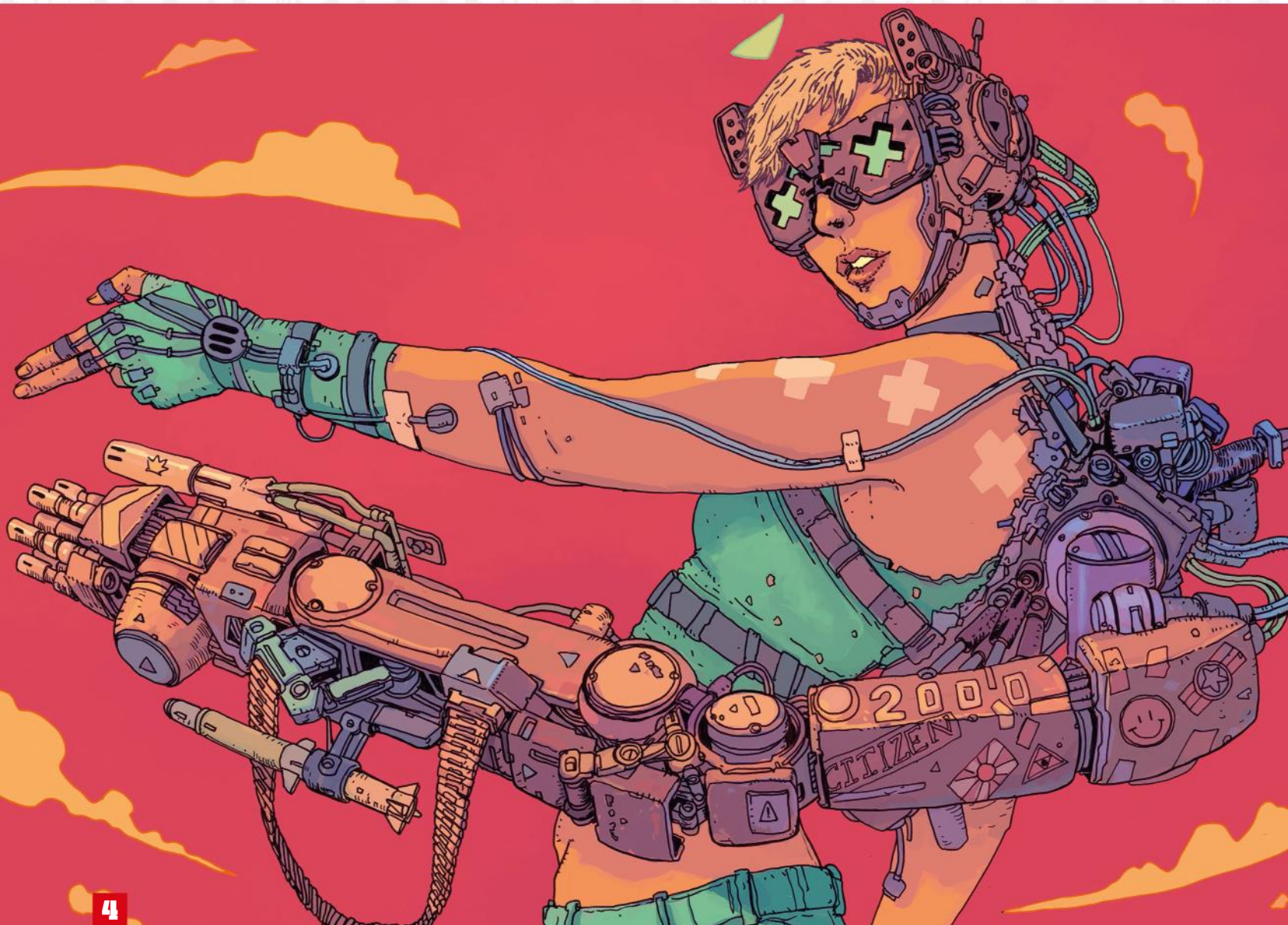
**2 FRANKENPUNK** "A cyberpunk take on the Frankenstein mythos. In my retelling Doctor Frankenstein is an androgynous genius obsessed with creating life, but also blending flesh and machine to create the ultimate mutant."

**3 THE FUTURE IS NOW** "The deadliest and most fascinating melody ever played on the Piano-Bomb. The wrong chord can trigger the detonation sequence. The right one can elevate the listener to a new level of consciousness."

**4 WARMACHINE** "A thousand atom bombs of power, plus top-notch engineering dedicated to destruction, and coolness."

**5 VIOLET REVOLUTION** "She rules the suburbs with an iron fist. Actually, four iron fists. Society betrayed her and now she will unleash hell in the name of the revolution."





# COMIC ARTIST CRIT



"I love Josan's comic aesthetic! And the fact that he seems to enjoy depicting heroines. But it's his enviable skill for the finer details that really captures and holds my attention."

**Alice Pattillo,**  
Staff Writer





Painting by Atomhank's  
Viktoriya Gavrilenko



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**YOUR QUESTIONS**  
answered by our panel  
of experienced artists

## MEET THE EXPERTS...

Struggling with a comic art technique? Having trouble with a character design? Our artists are here to help!

### Dave Brasgalla



Dave is a graphic designer and illustrator from Stockholm who works in both digital and traditional mediums. He's currently employed at games company Riot Minds.

[www.pixelhuset.se](http://www.pixelhuset.se)

### Tony Foti



Tony is a freelance illustrator from California who works primarily in the gaming and publishing industries, most notably on Fantasy Flight Games' Star Wars lines.

[www.tonyfotiart.com](http://www.tonyfotiart.com)

### PJ Holden



PJ Holden is Belfast-based comic artist who's best known for his work on Judge Dredd and Rogue Trooper, and is also the co-creator of Dept Of Monsterology.

[www.pauljholden.com](http://www.pauljholden.com)

### John Petersen



John is a production artist and animator for Engineering Systems, Inc. He's also an illustrator whose clients include Monte Cook Games and Catalyst Game Labs.

[www.petersenart.com](http://www.petersenart.com)

### Tom Foster



Tom is a professional comic book artist, best known for his work on 2000 AD and Judge Dredd Magazine. Between assignments, he writes and performs stand-up comedy.

[www.tomrfoster.deviantart.com](http://www.tomrfoster.deviantart.com)

### Michelle Hoefener



Michelle has worked in the gaming and entertainment industries for six years now. And she's been painting and publishing her work online for well over 15 years.

[www.patreon.com/michellehoefener](http://www.patreon.com/michellehoefener)

### Tom Fox



Tom is a freelance concept artist living in England and working on films and video games. Previous clients include Universal Studios and Aardman Animations.

[www.instagram.com/tomfoxdraws](http://www.instagram.com/tomfoxdraws)

# ARTIST Q&A



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### NEED HELP?

Your questions are answered in every regular issue of ImagineFX. Email [help@imaginefx.com](mailto:help@imaginefx.com)





## QUESTION

I want to draw someone getting pulled sharply in one direction. How should I achieve this?

Tina Wright, US

## ANSWER

Dave replies



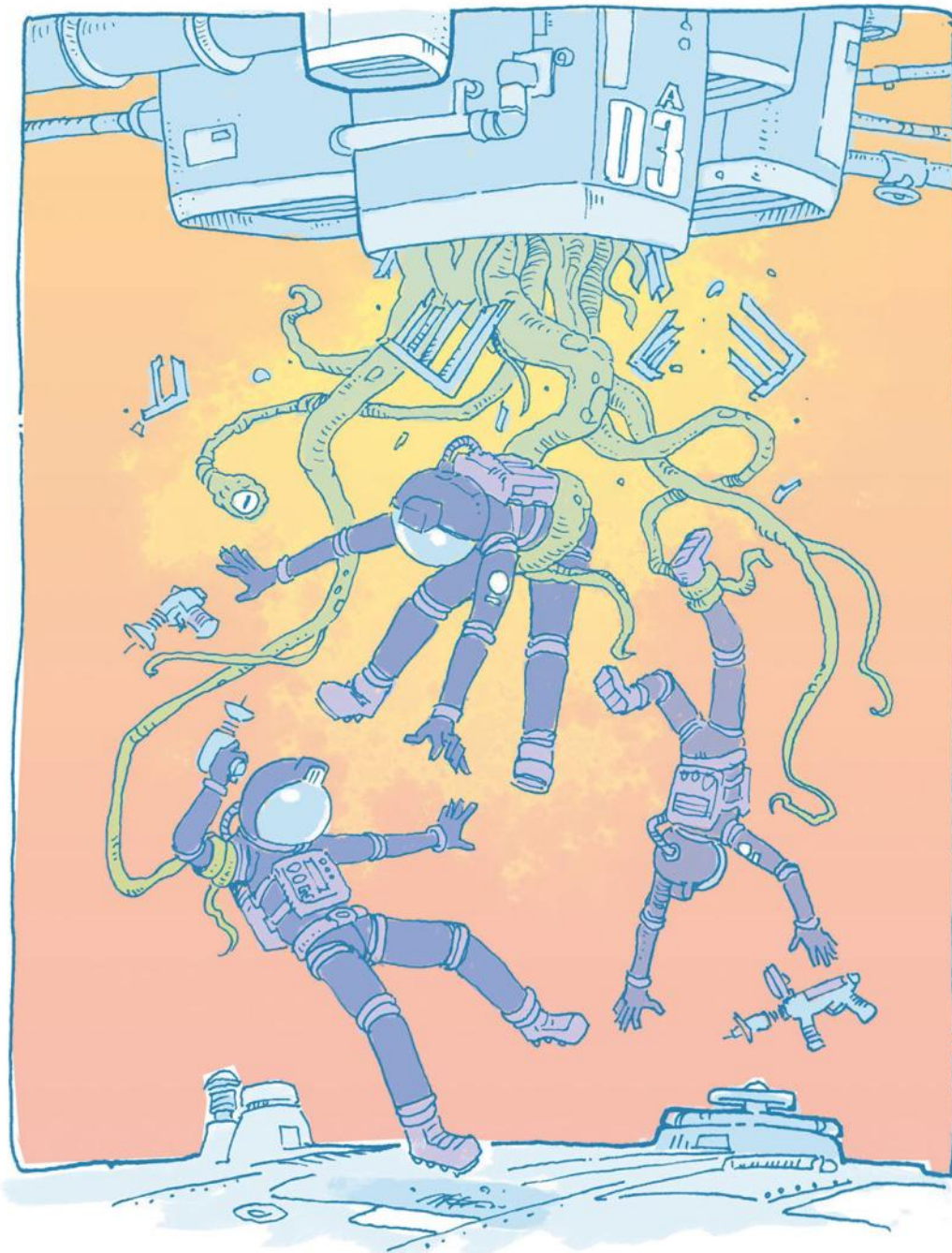
When yanking your character about in an action scene, consider the physics of the situation and how it affects the human body. Arms and legs will fly and flap about, and their positions can be used to highlight the motion you want to convey. When people stumble or fall, they'll often make frantic motions to try to correct their balance. Capturing some of that desperation will add that energy to your image.

Always watch those air ducts! These three spaceship crewmen risk their lives to demonstrate possible solutions for having a character pulled quickly in different directions.

A recent spate of Alien franchise discussions inspire this whimsical space monster scene. I want to examine three varied poses, with each one being created by an external force pulling on the figure. I make these up out of my head, so they're a bit loose, but such as exercise is excellent for teaching yourself how to make this kind of pose convincing. Try sketching a lot of these, and don't worry – there's always more brave spacemen where these came from!



Bedridden at home with no Wacom or scanner access, I inked my drawings and captured them with the iPad's camera – a handy and quick solution.



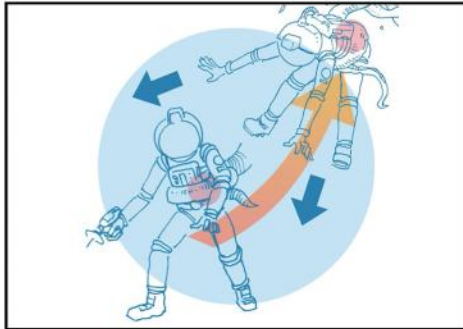
## ARTIST'S SECRET

PROP 'EM UP!

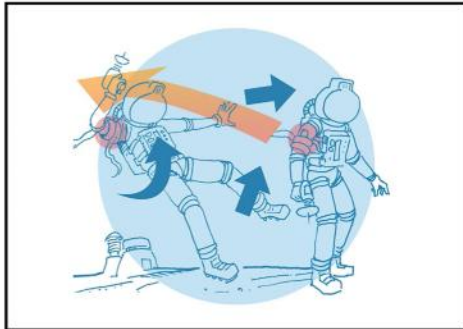
I've used several props in this image. Having characters losing their grips on their prop weapons helps me convey the violence and direction of the motions. Create a visual trail of related objects behind your moving figure to push the action.



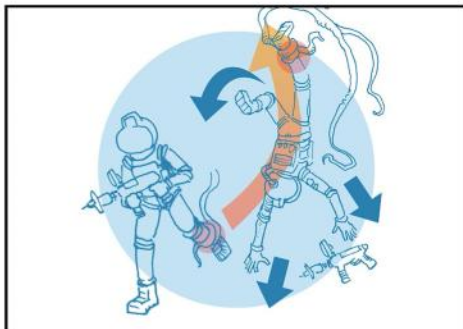
## STEP-BY-STEP: Jerk your characters around dramatically



**1** This astronaut is being yanked straight up off the ground by a tentacle round his waist. He's bent double, and his legs are straight. His arms are hanging down and splayed out a bit, so that his arms and legs become "arrows" highlighting the direction in which he's being pulled. The lost weapon enhances the feeling of upward movement.



**2** The alien's grip on this astronaut's upper arm is pulling him back. He's lost his balance, and throws the other arm outwards to try to regain it. The right forearm is jerked upwards, spoiling any controlled shot. The left leg scissors up as the figure falls back, and the head is tilted slightly forward in a bit of whiplash effect.



**3** One poor chap is being hoisted upside down by the left ankle. The arms hang almost straight down (reaching for the ground can enhance the feel of the pose) and the right leg is folding down with gravity as well, causing the body to arc back. Again, a lost weapon emphasises the idea of being lifted sharply and suddenly.

## QUESTION

I want to depict someone trapped in a bubble, but don't know where to start. Help!

Karl Henning, US



Since the surface of the bubble is mostly transparent, use highlights and reflections to create a feeling of depth.

The thicker and more opaque the skin of the bubble is, the softer edges will be on anything inside.



## ANSWER

Tony replies



There are a lot of ways for a character to become captured in a story, but in most epic science fiction or fantasy sagas at least one person ends up in a bubble. It could be an indestructible diamond sphere, a rubbery balloon bouncing across the hills, or just a very resilient soap bubble. Every material has its own set of properties, although each version will most likely be at least clear. Whenever you're painting something that's transparent, the main idea is to focus on the highlights and outline.

If you think about your line of sight from a bird's eye view, you'll notice that it goes through the least amount of material when aimed directly through the centre of the bubble. Ergo, the sides will be more opaque as the sphere turns away from the viewer (creating an outline of sorts). Even if the character inside is bending their prison into something other than a sphere, just remember that the more perpendicular a surface is to the viewer, the less visible it will be.

I suggest putting the outline on one layer and then creating two separate layers for the front

and back of the main surface. This enables you to manipulate their transparency. Place whoever or whatever is trapped on layers between those two and you'll have complete control over how opaque the bubble is. Then paint in the highlights, keeping in mind that the more shiny the surface is, the more hard-edged the reflections will be.

## ARTIST'S SECRET

COLOUR COORDINATING



Avoid using hues that are complementary to a translucent surface's colour in any object that's behind it, because the resulting mix will be something more dull. Placing a bright green jacket behind red cellophane, for instance, will just make it look grey.



## QUESTION

How do I imply menace through shadows?

Des Waterman, Canada

## ANSWER

PJ replies



A common misconception with shadows is that they're all about lighting. They aren't. In art of every kind – particularly comics and fantasy art – shadows are a tool of storytelling, and the lighting in your image should be arranged to suit the narrative.

Making a person look menacing is about dehumanising that person so what's left is an idea, a hint of humanity (or even a suggestion of inhumanity). I start by

drawing the head and then, following the planes of the face, I try to block in large shapes for shadow. Sometimes I'll try different configurations of shadows – if you're using Manga Studio this is easily achieved by creating new layers on top of the pencils to draw shadows over the image. Don't worry about details – it's all about trying to convey a mood rather than be faithfully accurate. However, it does help if you have a good basic understanding of the anatomy of the head.

When I'm trying to convey menace in an environment, I'll work on a composition that enables the shadows to surround the character under threat. I usually block in large shadowed shapes, then on the edges I'll add specific details that suggest the kind of environment – brickwork for an alleyway, criss-crossed metal support structures for an industrial landscape, or the blinking lights of a computer room.

Once I'm happy with the pencils, I'll start inking. Using a brush I'll feather where the edges of the shadow are softer and require a subtle transition. In other areas I'll use a Hunt 107 dip pen to cross-hatch, depending on the material being rendered. Once I've outlined the shadow I'll use a brush to fill the remaining blacks. If they're not fully filled in, a viewer's eye may often see menacing shapes lurking in them, too!



Framing a protagonist by shadows helps to give the panel a sense of menace. Opening the panel at the bottom leads the eye into the scene.



Lighting from the side introduces drama to a face, while keeping the background in silhouette will ensure that the setting remains threatening.

## ARTIST'S SECRET

THE SHADOW MORGUE

Build a shadow morgue – a resource file of images that use shadow to good effect. You can even create a face template to practise drawing good effect. This will help build up your knowledge of the planes of the face as well as a library of shadow shapes you can use when you need.



Consider adding elements to your scene that will display more aspects of the design, such as scale and any special features the vehicle may have.

## QUESTION

I'm inspired to use insects in my sci-fi art. What's my next step?

Nigel Fellmar, Canada

## ANSWER

Tony replies



Whether it's the Reapers from Mass Effect, Invid from Robotech or the aptly-named Starbug from Red Dwarf, insects (and pretty much every type of animal with an exoskeleton) have been inspiring science fiction spaceships since the genre took off. The complex designs of Nature are deeper and more thoughtful than most of us could hope to create on our best day, so it's a good starting point for all kinds of stuff.

As with anything you create, the first thing you need to do is figure out what

questions need to be asked. Whose spacecraft is this? Are they human-sized? What's the general demeanour of their race, and what sort of mission are they on? Or are they lost? Friendly or hostile? Is this their ship or did they steal it? The more of these kinds of questions you can answer, the more streamlined and focused your design will become. Just picking your favourite bits from a series of strange bugs can have an eccentric charm of its own, but only when you design with a strong narrative in mind will the message come across clearly.



VIDEO  
AVAILABLE



**QUESTION****How do I show a character's musculature underneath a superhero outfit?**

Katie Phelps, England

**ANSWER**

PJ replies



The simple solution to this question is to think of clothing as another layer of skin over the body. So the first step is to have a good understanding (okay, simple-ish) of the character's basic anatomy that you wish to convey.

In the case of our superhero The Judge, his physique is granite-like but not "cut". In other words, he's muscular but unless he's exerting himself in some manner, it's more relaxed muscle.

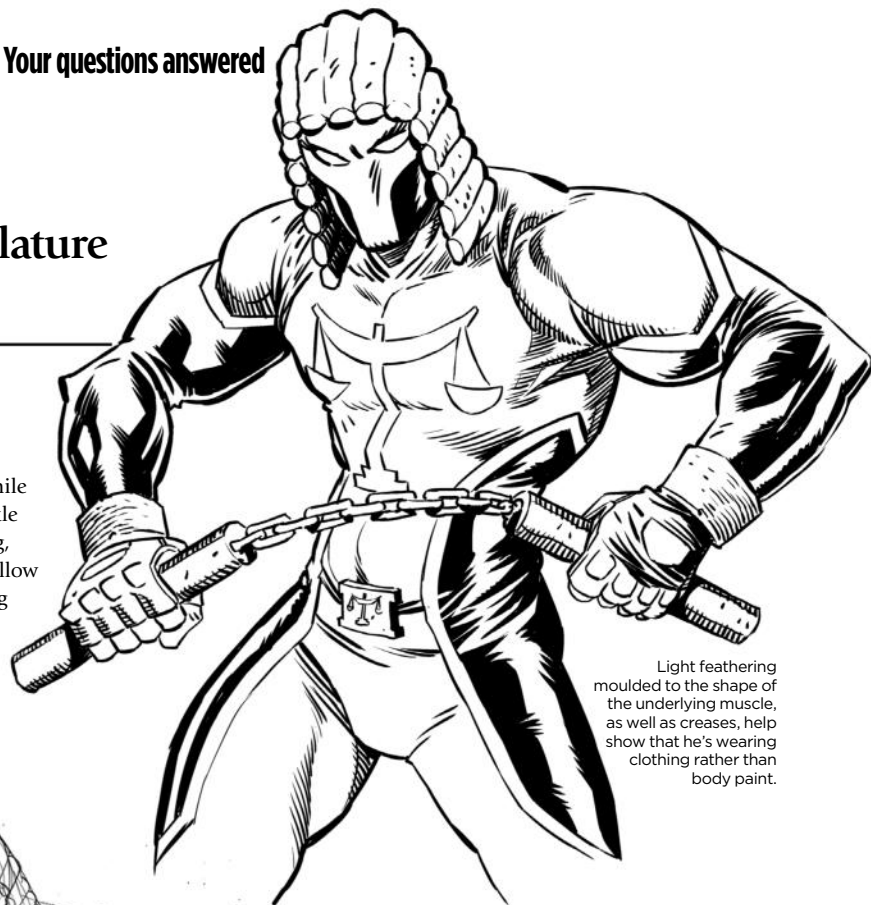
Once I've roughed out the figure that I want to draw, I begin to add the fabric around that. Often that means taking into account the kind of material the outfit is made from, as well as any design elements on the suit. While most superhero outfits don't tend to wrinkle, it can add a note of realism to an outfit. And as a simple rule, you'd expect to see wrinkles around the parts of the body that are compressed together. Of course, where wrinkles are compressing there's usually a corresponding stretching taking place opposite that compression, and how much wrinkling occurs depends on the kind of material.

Once I've established the outline of the material and where it's folded, I can begin the rendering process. Rendering depends largely on what the material and colour of the fabric is, as well as the environment the character finds themselves in. Leather material

takes a lot of deep shadows and specular highlights, while fabric will have a lot of subtle feathering. When rendering, though, it's important to follow the curves of the underlying muscle structure, so even where contrasting fabrics meet there's a consistency on display.



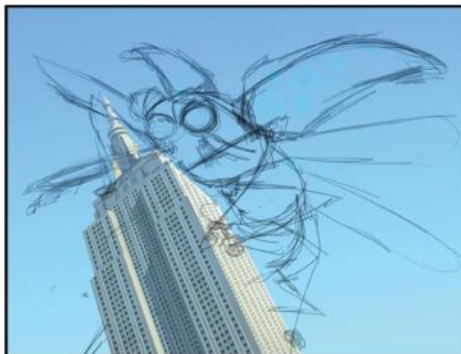
Even in this sketch, you can see that the outfit sits on top of the body rather than being vacuum sealed to it.



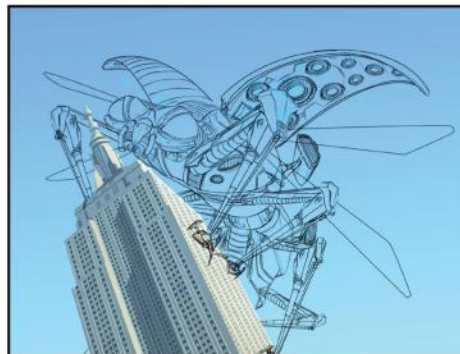
Light feathering moulded to the shape of the underlying muscle, as well as creases, help show that he's wearing clothing rather than body paint.

**ARTIST'S SECRET****EVERYTHING IS STORYTELLING**

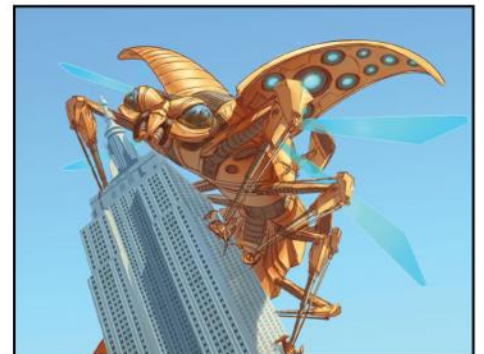
Rendering the fabric is a great opportunity to get in a lot of micro-storytelling. The folds can do the job of expressing movement and speed, and the shadows can carry a lot of dramatic weight. Don't let realism weigh down your decision-making process.

**STEP-BY-STEP: From bug to buggy**

**1** Use the answers to your questions to create a theme for your design. In this case I want it to be an exploration ship, so my primary focus is mobility. The wings of a pine beetle, dragonfly tails and the segmentation of a beetle fly help give this vehicle a more all-terrain feeling.



**2** To avoid making a ship that could be mistaken for an actual insect, use your animal reference to lay out the initial shapes and then look to jet fighters, Mars rovers and other artificial craft as you flesh out the components, to introduce that unnatural, this-was-built-not-grown touch.



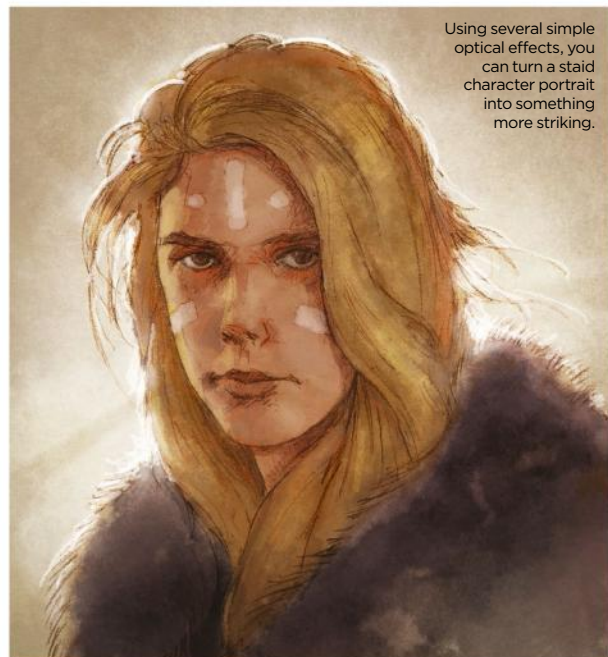
**3** When figuring out the details, avoid making the entire ship too complex. If every square inch is exploding with information, the effect is like TV static, and it all just blends together. Conversely, if the whole ship is just one generic shape, there isn't much to entertain the viewer with.



**QUESTION**

How can I recreate the effect of an angelic backlight on a character?

Nicola Bradshaw, England

**ANSWER**

Dave replies



Painting bright light can often be a challenge, but mastering a few simple techniques will make this much easier for you.

A mistake I used to make was to push my bright light source as white as possible, but since we can't get whiter than white, where does one go from there? It's actually simpler to create the illusion of brightness by careful handling of the areas around the light source instead.

Direct light scatters, both in the atmosphere and in the human eye. Learn to simulate this corona effect in your art instead of blowing out the contrast in your light source, and you'll produce a much more satisfying result. If you combine this with careful edge lighting, you can produce a powerful visual effect.

Crepuscular rays, or sun rays, are perhaps the most obvious effect, but it's easy to overdo them. A soft touch with these can do the job very well without things growing out of control. In addition, a hint of bounce light from your foreground can contribute to the sense of a scene being bathed in light. Let's look at how adding each one of these effects drives the image closer to our desired result.

**ARTIST'S SECRET****LAYER CAKE**

For this kind of combined lighting effect, it's good practice to keep each effect on its own layer. You'll be able to dial each component up and down, and develop a sense of how much is too much.

**STEP-BY-STEP: Creating angelic backlight**

**1** Here's my basic line drawing and colouring. I've scanned in my pencils and used digital watercolour brushes. The value range isn't yet all the way up to the white point: I want to have somewhere to dial things up to! I've also darkened around the edges of her hair, which is mostly where I'll be using the colour corona effect later on in my painting process.



**2** I use a big grainy brush to spray in light behind the girl's head, and then on a separate layer, set to Overlay, I employ the same brush to dust light around the edges of her form. The end result is called colour corona, and gives a sense of brightness to the figure. I'm still not up to pure white yet, but already the feeling of the image has changed for the better.



**3** This stage shows just the application of the edge light layer. Don't outline everything evenly, but instead think about where a light source behind the figure will break through most. I hit those areas with a bit of airbrushed glow. You can see that even this effect alone can be effective and dramatic. The edging can be pure white here if you want.



**4** Here are all the effects combined, along with added crepuscular rays, but with the colour layers turned off. It's clear that this type of lighting can also work independently of colour, and can be applied to toned drawings or manga styles equally effectively. I'm always a bit wary of crepuscular rays, but with careful treatment they can work very well.



## QUESTION

My reference-based drawings look stiff and boring. What's the solution?

Paul Limpar, Sweden

## ANSWER

Tony replies



Well, the short answer is to not actually copy your reference, but use it as a guide. I know this can be daunting when you're just starting out, but the key to creating a dynamic pose from a model or photo is being comfortable pushing, stretching and moving bits around to make the drawing say what you want.

Part of this is just something that will come with time as you build up figure drawing mileage, but knowing what to

strive for is half the battle. For this example I want to really emphasise energy and motion, so I'm drawing the singer, dancer, actress, military spy and Legion of Honour recipient Josephine Baker.

The first sketch I've made – the left-hand one of the two drawings below left – is a direct copy of the reference photo. Though I'm still making a lot of design choices in regards to line weight and what I leave out (that's just sort of drawing in general), shape-wise I've made no attempt to stray from the source image. With this as a starting point, I'll show you how I push the pose to convey an idea. My goal is to use gesture, structure and technique to tell a bit of story with the drawing.



The finished sketch has some value added in to separate the figure from the background. Even your brushwork becomes part of the design.



Hopefully the second drawing has a bit more gusto in it than the first, which copies the source directly.

## ARTIST'S SECRET

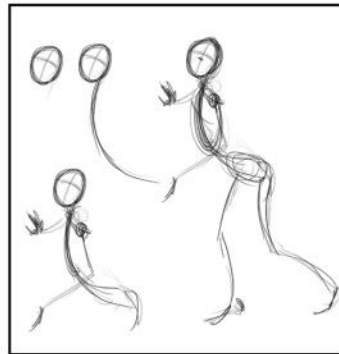
SHOOT MORE REFERENCE

*If a gesture drawing really captures the mood you're going for but strays too much from the original reference, just shoot or find some more. You don't need to redraw the gesture, just use the new reference to fill in any spots where you don't feel comfortable improvising.*

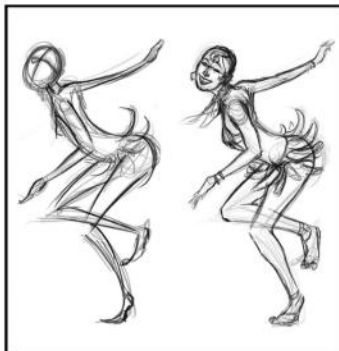
## STEP-BY-STEP: Start small and loose



**1** Decide how cartoony you want to get, what aspect of the model you want to communicate (personality trait, physical feature, particular motion and so on), then try to tell that story with the pose. In my case, there is an excitement to Josephine Baker's live performances (or videos of them, at least) that I don't see in most posed photos. Conveying that will be my goal.



**2** Technique and varying line weight go a long way, but the foundation of a vibrant figure drawing is a descriptive gesture. Stay loose, experiment and have a clear centre line before adding in the limbs. Use fast, simple strokes to try out different ways of bending and stretching the body. Don't fuss with any single gesture, try out options until you find a pose that works for your theme.



**3** Partly because it's better for a tutorial and mostly because it's my favourite, I'm going with the pose that strays furthest from the source material. I've used a lot of fluid, curved lines to get that bubbly mood, so it's important to now sketch in anatomy and make sure everything is still working proportionally. When you bend and twist the body, it's vital to double-check your structure.



**4** As with the gesture and structure, you can push the character of the drawing by using thematically appropriate line work. An angry bouncer, say, might be drawn with short, straight, hard strokes. A drunk man stooped over a bar could be drawn with wavy, slightly disconnected lines. For this piece I'm focusing on smooth, jazzy curves that reinforce the happy mood I'm going for.





Take your original sketch and do several colour comps to see which palette fits the mood. Don't limit yourself!

## ARTIST'S SECRET

**SWITCH COLOURS QUICKLY**  
When I'm having trouble selecting a colour palette I sometimes let the computer help me decide. There are several online apps to help you: [color.adobe.com](http://color.adobe.com) and [colourlovers.com](http://colourlovers.com) feature great web interface tools that enable you to construct a colour scheme on the fly.

## QUESTION

Can a garish colour scheme make for a more effective illustration?

LaVerne Harleson, US

## ANSWER

John replies



The key thing to consider, whatever palette you're using, is colour harmony. Do the colours play well together? Or are they all competing for the viewer's attention? Another important factor is what kind of mood are you trying to create for your audience?

What makes for an effective painting is how the parts come together. Colour, value, shape language,

composition and rhythm all work together to craft a compelling image. If you're relying on a bombastic colour scheme to save your piece, you may have other issues that need to be addressed.

Here I paint over a greyscale drawing several times, because the light sources change in each image. My two favourite Photoshop colour tools for doing this are Color Balance and Levels adjustment layers. In a Levels adjustment, you

can tweak the red, green, and blue channels individually. Gradient Overlay is also a wonderful adjustment layer to quickly assign one colour to light values and another colour to dark.

The problems with using bright, saturated colours usually arise when you overuse them. But it really depends on the painting and what you're trying to convey. If you can pull it off, a "garish" palette isn't garish at all.



**QUESTION**

I think my basic drawing is not too bad, but what can I do to work on my design skills?

Anders Merson, US

**ANSWER**

Tony replies



I recently read an anecdote about a pottery group that may or may not be true, but I think the message is. A pottery teacher split her students into two groups. One half would spend the entire semester designing their perfect pot, the other half would be graded on the number of finished pots they produced. Once the final lesson was over, a competition was held to choose the best results. Half the students turned in their extensively researched pot designs, while the other half chose their favourite from the many they had made over the semester. After voting was over, it turned out that most of the pieces chosen were from the side that had made lots of pots.

The message is that experience trumps research when you're learning a new skill. Assuming that's true, I think a good strategy for honing your designer's eye is to make lots of compositions – nothing too complicated, just something where you can experiment with two-dimensional shapes and explore what you like.

You may not know who Patrick Nagel is, but he painted the album cover for Rio by '80s-supergroup Duran Duran. I think that his style of flat colours, clean lines and simple shapes makes for a fun kind of student exercise. That, and it gives me a reason to draw the Nagel-style image of British TV celebrity Sue Perkins that this world so desperately needs. Fair warning, a Google search for Nagel's art may get a little saucy.

Below is a drawing where I'm using fewer elements. I suggest at least trying a few where your goal is to use as few shapes as possible.



Don't stress about it, just have fun and create something you like. It may sound crazy, but the more fun you have, the more you'll learn.



VIDEO  
AVAILABLE

**ARTIST'S SECRET****THUMBS IN A FOLDER**

With this exercise and pretty much all illustrations, I find it helps to keep all of my thumbnails in their own folder. Being able to scale and scroll through them is the easiest way for me to know which ones I prefer.

**STEP-BY-STEP: Stay simple and experiment**

- 1 Using the human figure as a starting point, try playing around with various poses cropped off in different ways. Draw small so you don't get tied down in details. The goal is to crank out a lot of thumbnails



in a short amount of time. You can get pose inspiration from reference image sites, photo shoots with friends and of course the trusty old mirror.

- 2 Draw shapes on different layers so you can move and scale them. Save a JPG every time you make a noticeable change, then look at all your images to see what stands out. Pay attention to where



shapes point, what's at the centre of your circles, and what the placement of your shapes emphasises. Direct the eye. Keep experimenting. Make lots of pots!

- 3 Like the figures and shapes, keep your colour palette simple. You don't have to use white for the skin (emulating Nagel), but try making things as compositionally exciting as possible with seven colours or



less. Use contrast to draw attention where you want it. Matching hues on the figure to those on the background can help make the two feel harmonious.



## QUESTION

### How can I give my comic characters convincing body language?

Hamilton Maddock, US

## ANSWER

Tom Foster replies



Good reference material is a must when you want to convey a specific emotion in your characters, but I often find it difficult to source pictures of people emoting convincingly. Stock photography is often very obviously staged and using myself as a model relies too heavily on my own, pitiful acting ability.

A few canny changes in my image search criteria can make all the difference. For example, footballers are almost always either wildly elated or incredibly angry. This affords a tremendous opportunity to the student of human behaviour, as photographs from football and other sporting events often provide a unique glimpse of raw, unfiltered emotion. For subtler expressions, I turn to screen actors. I try to think of a memorable performance that conveyed the emotion I'm trying to relate and seek out screenshots from that film, or pause the DVD, if I have it.

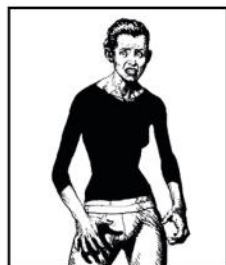
I try to track down at least two pictures of different people for each expression. I then look for the commonalities, to divine what is universal about how a certain emotion affects the face and body. Once I isolate those visual cues, I apply them to my character.

Your characters have a potentially limitless range as actors, but utilising it can require a bit of homework. I used seven photographs for reference here.



## STEP-BY-STEP: Conveying specific emotions

**1** A tense person will be a little hunched and have uneven shoulders, because the body is gearing up to have to either protect itself or run. The jaw will usually



be clenched and the eyes wide. I emphasise this by making the iris/pupil a little smaller. There might also be a hint of disgust in their expression, to suggest their sense of nauseous anxiety.

**2** Laughter is often involuntary. While people in the throes of hilarity may open themselves up by leaning back and dropping their shoulders, the body will



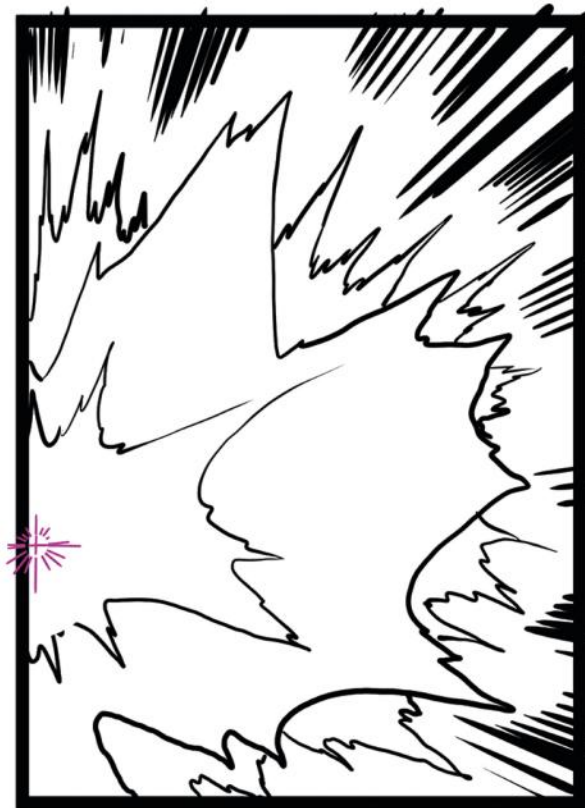
often sense its vulnerability and shield the face and vital organs with the hands. The nostrils will flare, the fat of the face converge around the eyes, and teeth and gums be on show.

**3** When your character is exhibiting an aggressive emotion such as rage, the head and hands will typically be projected forward. Tendons and muscles will be



tensed and the lips curled inward to bare the teeth – these are primal intimidation tactics. Be careful not to exaggerate the mouth too far, though: doing so can dehumanise the character.





Despite inking traditionally, I will often use the Focus Ruler in Manga Studio to rapidly add focus lines to a drawing.

## QUESTION

Can you help me depict a comic-book explosion with more force and impact?

Costas Borgas, US

## ANSWER

PJ replies



Ideally you want an explosion to dominate the panel or page that you're drawing, and typically the explosion panel will be the largest on a page. Picking a zero point for the explosion (the point from which an explosion radiates outwards) on the bottom of the panel means you can have a large amount of space to show the energies bursting out. I'll radiate blast waves of power out from the zero point. These are my primary forces, helping me get a sense of the broad shape of the explosion. I'll add random arcs of debris shooting out beyond the limits of the blast. The arc gives the impression of movement and, importantly, shows the impact of gravity.

Behind these primary forces I'll add further zigzags of blast forces, weaved together more tightly. These secondary forces will help give a bit of dimensionality to the explosion. I'll start detailing here any clouds of ash that the explosion may be throwing off, too. Remember that everything is radiating out of the zero point. Usually I'll ink the forces with a pen so the details can be as tight as possible – the tighter these forces appear, the larger the sense of scale.

Finally, once I've done all this, I'll add some focus lines drawn from the panel borders pointing towards the blast radius. This will help make the explosion appear brighter.

Here I've added a little white digital splatter to add texture to the blast, and enhance the feel of an explosion taking place on the water.



## ARTIST'S SECRET

### SOUND EFFECT LETTERING

With sound effects the letter shapes can be more important than the words. Here the explosion is preceded by the crackle from an energy weapon. I lettered the KA as sharp text, and THOOM! as contrasting styles to create visual interest.

**KA THOOM!**



## QUESTION

### How can I make dynamic page layouts easy to follow?

Nathan Shannon, Canada



An increasingly varied page layout can help escalate tension and drama in a scene, but the action should still be clearly delineated.

## ANSWER

Tom Foster replies



Page layouts have a lot of influence over how a reader follows a story. Here I lay out a page detailing an escalating conflict. In the first two panels, there's only mild conflict, so I use straightforward angles and panel placement. But as things get more heated, I begin to drop or break panel borders, stagger panel placement and incorporate more dynamic angles and perspective. I use DAZ 3D to plan my panel compositions; manipulating the camera placement and focal length can create some dramatic effects that would be difficult to achieve using traditional methods.

I then use Photoshop to organise my DAZ renders. All the major compositional elements in each panel are placed to guide the reader from one panel to the next in sequence. The figures in panel 3 are shot from such an angle as to create an invisible diagonal line that leads from the upper figure, through the lower figure, through the left fist of the character in panel 4, right to the focal point of panel 4: the face of the charging character. I then guide the reader through the focal points of the following two panels in a similar way, using one continuous, zig-zagging line of action. This way the action can be dynamically staged, yet be clear and easy-to-follow for a reader.



A strong thumbnail with a clear line of action can be invaluable in anchoring the core elements of a page.

## ARTIST'S SECRET

### LEADING THE EYE

*Drawing an imaginary, or even literal, line through your layout to represent the path of the reader's eye across the page can be a great help in pulling all your major storytelling elements together, so that they flow smoothly.*

## QUESTION

### My comic characters' faces lack variety – can you help?

Abi Thorne, England



Emphasising different, key aspects of the face can create a variety of convincing characters, so long as the fundamentals of form and anatomy are maintained.

## ANSWER

Tom Foster replies



When drawing unusual or particularly characterful facial types, I find it important to have a strong understanding of the underlying anatomy, because my ability to convincingly exaggerate elements of this will govern the legitimacy of my characters. So I have reference material, such as anatomical diagrams, on hand to cover any of the gaps in my knowledge.

I look up images of celebrities whose faces seem to match the character type I'm aiming for most closely, and study the dominant shapes in their faces. However, I try not to base my design too closely on

one person, as a noticeable resemblance to a familiar figure may bring the reader out of the fiction of the story and compromise the character's own unique identity. So I draw from elements of different sources, because noticing the commonalities and the differences in my chosen models helps me understand what the core elements that define the character are.

By building up enough knowledge of the foundations of facial geography, I can choose precisely which elements to keep generic and which to make distinct, to better define only the things about the character that I wish to communicate.





I use a bright, old-school colour palette to complement the clean line work and the fun subject matter.

## QUESTION

### How can I achieve bold, timeless comics colours?

Jacquie Penn, England

## ANSWER

Tom Foster replies



Your choice of comics colours may look good on-screen but might print much muddier than you predicted. So I make most of my colour decisions based on specific ink values that I know will print well. Back in the old days of comics, colourists had a limited palette: initially 63, then later 124 colours, each of these colours consisting of a combination of cyan, magenta and yellow.

For this reason, I always keep track of the ink proportions I'm using by inputting my colour values numerically, using the

CMYK sliders in Photoshop's Color panel (I always work in CMYK mode if the work is intended for print). I usually use multiples of five, so the basic flesh tone I used here equates to C=0, M=15, Y=20. Then I used direct multiples of that to add shading (for example, C=0, M=30, Y=40).

This leads to a very natural gradation of colour that seems rich and organic, even if it isn't photo-realistic. This system also helps you prevent black creeping into your colours, which will muddy them up and obscure the detail in the inks.

## STEP-BY-STEP: Make your line work fly off the page



**1** First I do my flatting. This is the process of filling in the basic areas of colour. I make sure every area is flush to the next, with no white between them, by working on a separate layer from the inks and using the Lasso tool with the Anti-alias option switched off.



**2** I then rough in my areas of shadow on a separate layer (I always keep a layer of just the flat colours as this enables me to select areas easily with the Magic Wand). This gives me an idea of what the full colour palette will look like. It's a quick process that instantly adds dimension.



**3** From here I render the colours, using the shadow colours with a lower Opacity brush to build them up. I'll also add a few highlights tones and texture details. I do a test printout of the finished version, because sometimes the screen will flatter the rendering a little.

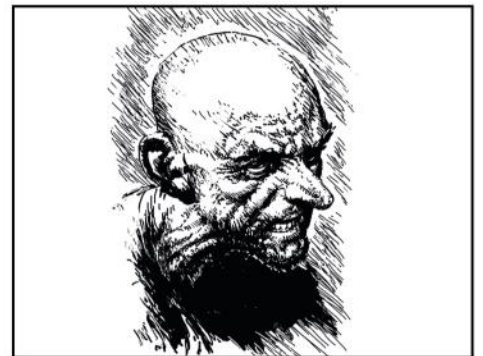
## STEP-BY-STEP: Develop distinct facial types



**1** When drawing a young, healthy character, knowledge of the basics of proportion is essential. I hint a little at the underlying muscle and bone structure, but primarily aim to achieve balance and subtlety. Too much of any one specific characteristic can be jarring for the viewer.



**2** A fuller face can be a challenge because the bone structure and musculature are obscured by fatty masses, so anatomical diagrams may fall short. I use a fair bit of photo reference here to study how the fat around the jaw and cheeks alters the basic forms of the face.



**3** For a wizened or gaunt face I will exaggerate the underlying bone and muscle structures, making use of anatomy diagrams as reference material. If I want to age the figure, looser skin around the jaw and neck and bags under the eyes help to lend authenticity to more obvious wrinkles.



## QUESTION

How can I turn a flat figure pose into a dynamic one?

Jenine Woodhouse, Australia



Wonder Woman – or any heroic character – practically demands to be placed in a dynamic pose.

## Answer Michelle replies



Dynamic poses are fun for the artist to create, exciting for the viewer, and can strengthen the story and composition of your illustration. Such poses are best achieved with loose gestural thumbnails or sketches, in which you can visualise the pose, angle and composition of the character.

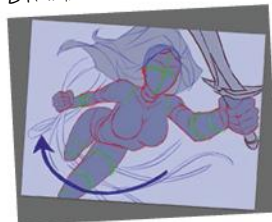
During the initial sketch stage, a figure can become flat or stiff, taking away from the dynamic energy and storytelling that an artist wants to create. Some common pitfalls that can cause this include lack of depth, inaccurate perspective or foreshortening, a non-dynamic camera angle, and a pose that's not based on the beginning or the ending of an action – these always have the most impact.

You can turn a non-dynamic pose into a dynamic one by creating gestural thumbnails. Work on top of a chosen

gestural thumbnail with cylinders, blocks, volumes and perspective, before fleshing out the final pose with lighting, rendering, detail and special effects.

## ARTIST'S SECRET

DYNAMIC ANGLES

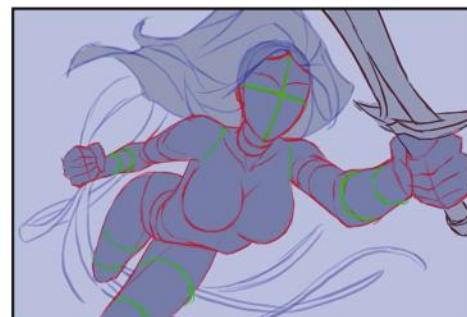


Tilt the pose to an off-balance angle to give it a sense of motion and visual punch. Rotating the camera and horizon line also adds to the dynamism of the pose and the composition.

## STEP-BY-STEP: Bring your characters to life



**1** I create gestural pose thumbnails, thinking about what I want the figure to be doing, what angle I want them to be viewed from, and how I want them in the scene. I build upon the chosen sketch with volumes and forms, fleshing it out with cylinders and blocks to achieve the three-dimensional angles of the body parts.



**2** On a new layer, I build on top of the volumetric pose drawing with more detail, fleshing out the hand poses, clothing, dynamic hair groups and shapes, and dynamic accessories such as Wonder Woman's Lasso of Truth. I then clean up the detail drawing and prepare it for the painting phase and final adjustments.



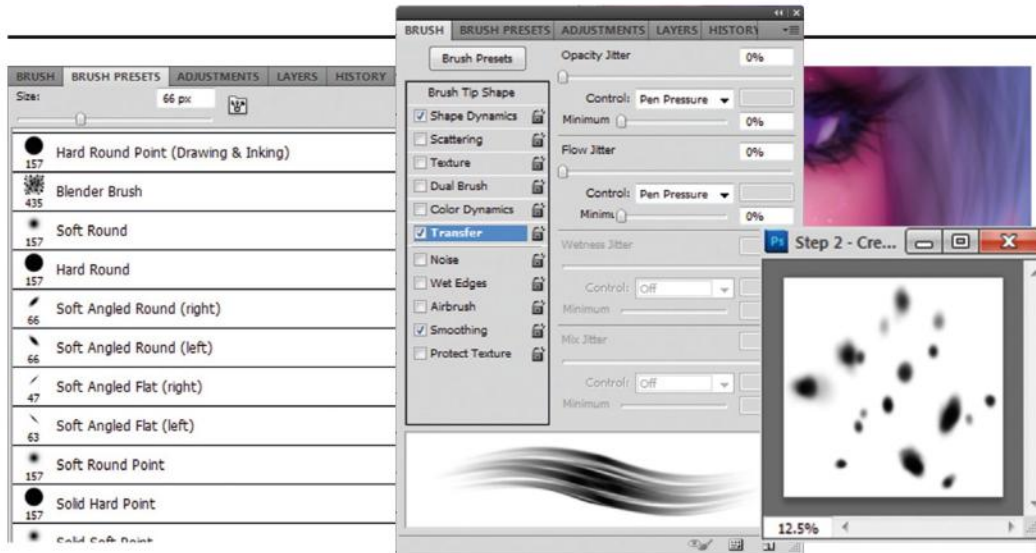
**3** I block in the basic lighting with an airbrush, thinking about the volumes and how I want the lighting to affect them. Once I'm happy with this stage, I go in on top with more rendering and detail. When the rendering is finished, I add finishing effects such as motion blur to add extra motion and dynamism to the illustration.



## QUESTION

Can you help me build up a library of custom Photoshop brushes?

Daisy Curtis, Canada



## ANSWER

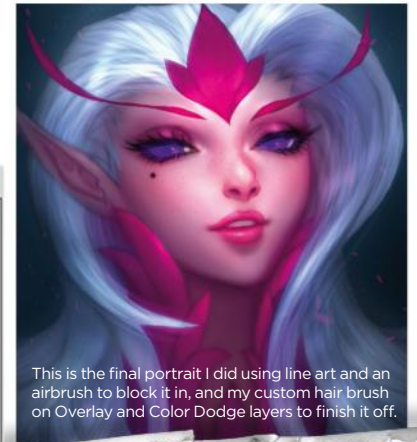
Michelle replies



There are many free Photoshop brushes and textures online that an artist can download, which in many instances can be all an artist will need in their custom brush library. Yet creating custom brushes from your own photo textures or hand-painted samples can also come in handy if you want to create a specific effect that can help make your art unique.

Here, I'm setting up a custom brush library, made up of custom and free stock brushes. I'm also creating and customising a hair brush to add to the library.

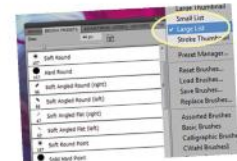
You can build your own custom Photoshop brush library by collecting stock brushes from the web, creating your own brushes from scratch, editing pre-existing brushes that come with Photoshop, and organising your brushes into an easy-to-browse brush library. Here I'll explain how to create your own custom Photoshop brush library to help you save time creating awesome effects in your art.



This is the final portrait I did using line art and an airbrush to block it in, and my custom hair brush on Overlay and Color Dodge layers to finish it off.

## ARTIST'S SECRET

**CUSTOMISE BRUSH LIBRARY VIEWS**  
A great way to help you navigate your brush library is to customise how each brush is viewed in the library. For quick navigation

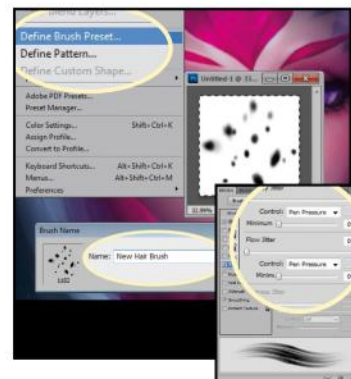


of your brush library, you can switch the brush thumbnail view to Small List or Large List.

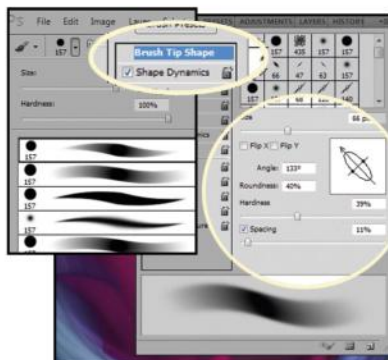
## STEP-BY-STEP: Build your custom brush library



**1** One quick way to collect a lot of useful Photoshop brushes is to download free stock ones from useful sites such as brusheezy.com and myphotoshopbrushes.com. These sites provide a wide variety of brushes and brush libraries with many different uses. When collecting brushes from the web, I select which brushes I want and create custom libraries with them.



**2** To create custom brushes I take a photo or custom-painted shape or texture and convert it to black-and-white. Then I select it using the Rectangular Marquee tool and go to Edit>Define Brush Preset and give it a useful name that will enable me to find it easily. In the Brush window I can customise the brush's settings such as Shape Dynamics, Scattering, Texture and so on.



**3** I also use Photoshop's default brushes that have extra useful customisable tip options. These can be changed dynamically with a stylus and hotkeys as I paint, such as the Hardness, Softness, Angle and Roundness. To customise a pre-existing Photoshop brush, I select it from the Brush Preset dialog and adjust its properties in the Brush Tip Shape section of the Brush window.



**4** To organise brushes into an easy-to-browse brush library, I open the Brush Presets window, click the icon in the upper-right corner and select Brush Preset Manager. From there I Ctrl-click to select each brush that I want to save into a new customised brush library and then click Save Set. I also add the name and edit the order of the brushes in the Brush Preset Manager.



## QUESTION

### My cosy bar lacks atmosphere. Help!

Kerri Wicker, Scotland

## ANSWER

Tom Fox replies



First I consider what sort of lens and perspective to use.

Here I've chosen to draw the characters with a mid to long lens. The vanishing points converge relatively slowly; it's very close to drawing in one-point perspective. A long lens creates an observational feel to the image, as if viewing from a distance and zooming in. Second, I think about designing the light. I want a cosy scene, so I chose a warm, evening light, which implies a comfortable setting and lack of danger. This lighting, combined with the choice of lens, helped to create a relaxed scene before I even considered the subject of the characters.

Drawing people drunk is a challenge. Observing drunk people, you'll see that often they talk in an intense way. They gesticulate, wave their hands around, stamp their feet and do just about anything to support what they're saying. It's hard to make yourself understood when you're drinking, so they use all the tools at their disposal. There are also varying degrees of drunkenness and it can be easy to misjudge it. Here, the characters are leaning in towards each other; they're relaxed and comfortable, but not dancing on tables just yet. I've painted the background loosely, to help keep attention on my figures.

Keeping the palette of the background muted and increasing the saturation within the figures helps to draw focus on where you want viewer to look.



Use Photoshop's Lasso and Paint Bucket tools to fill in a flat silhouette layer. Above, add colour layers for separate elements: skin, hair, clothes... and beer!

## ARTIST'S SECRET

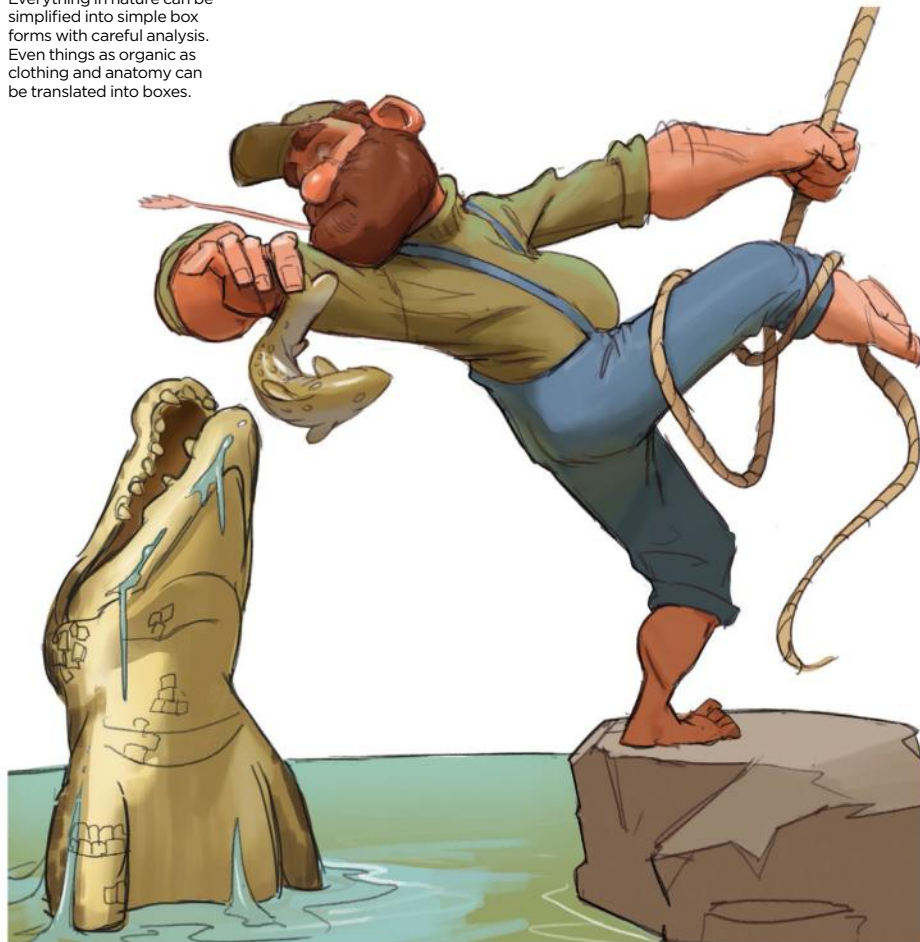
BACKGROUND CONSIDERATIONS



These axes resolve at a distance, but actually contain very little detail. Paint at 100 per cent opacity to force yourself to choose the correct hue, saturation and value.



Everything in nature can be simplified into simple box forms with careful analysis. Even things as organic as clothing and anatomy can be translated into boxes.



## QUESTION

Please help me depict a figure who's off balance!

Klaudiusz Chmielewski, England

## ANSWER

Tom Fox replies

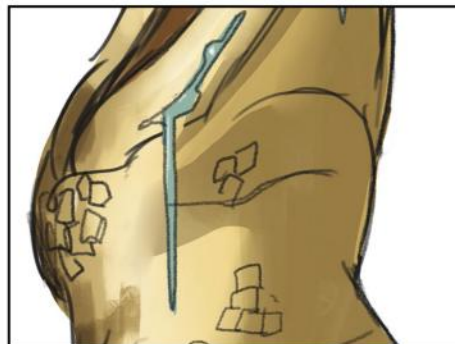
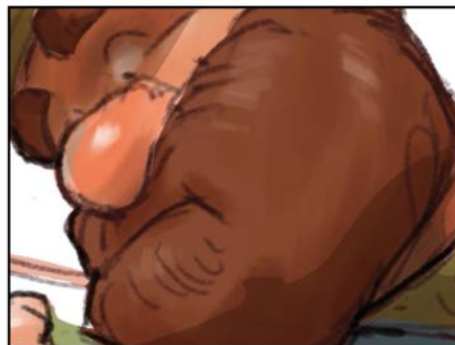


With a bit of practice, you can control not just whether the figure is balanced, but how unbalanced you want them to be.

First, draw the ground plane, in the form of a grid, and the horizon line to establish eye level. Now draw the major masses as boxes – the torso and hips – and get them leaning to one side. If you can get some twist between those two, then that's even better. Once the ground and boxes are blocked in, the figure should already appear off-balance, without even having drawn the limbs. You can see these highlighted in my first process image.

Next, draw the legs. Draw a line down from the boxes to the floor. Now choose where you want the feet to be. If you draw them at a point directly below the torso, it'll add stability to the figure. The further you place the feet from the point below the torso, the more off-balance the pose will become. Imagine where the weight is distributed. Posing yourself is the best way to imagine this. Establish a clear lean and you're off to a great start.

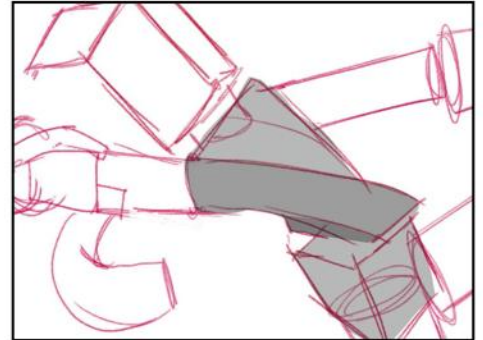
Finally, add the arms as cylinders and you've blocked out an off-balance gesture. Job done!



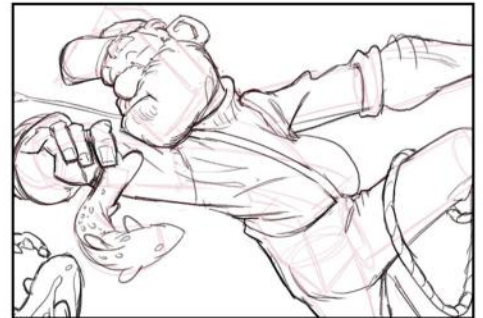
There's no need to overcomplicate your colouring. Flat colours with just two or three values to describe the values will do. Then just add highlights to show differences in material.

## STEP-BY-STEP:

### Paint a character in a predicament



**1** Boxes for torso and hips establish the gesture and rough proportions. This gesture includes a nice twist in the torso, between the hips and the mass of the chest. Although the pelvis and ribcage don't bend, don't forget to keep these forms quite flexible, because they represent the masses of the body, not the bones.



**2** Now for the anatomy and detailing. Reduce the opacity of the box forms and draw straight over the top. Always try the pose yourself and imagine yourself in that position. What attitude does the pose suggest? Would legs turn inwards or out? The more you inhabit your character, the more dynamic your gestures will be.



**3** Fill the area under the lines to give a silhouette as a base layer, then paint flat colours on top of this base. Try to be delicate and use smaller jumps in value than you'd imagine. Subtle changes in value, hue or saturation can add a nice colour vibration, as you can see in the blue-ish highlights on the top of his jumper.



## SKETCHBOOK PRO

# STREAMLINE YOUR SKETCH PROCESS

Get to grips with SketchBook Pro's Lagoon user interface and enhance your workflow in this excellent drawing program, says our seasoned expert, **PARIS CHRISTOU**

**A**utodesk's SketchBook Pro for Windows and Mac is known for giving artists easy access to its many tools when working on any type of artwork.

The essential philosophy behind the software is to help artists feel they have an application that acts just like a real-world paper sketchbook, which you'd use while out and about. The program is quick, simple and very effective.

SketchBook's Pro's Lagoon is a user interface (UI) that offers a series of common shortcuts for speedy access. By default, it's located on the bottom left of the application screen. Having these common shortcuts in one compact area helps you to streamline your painting process. Better still, you can even modify the Lagoon to fit your exact needs. So, let's see how this can be achieved and how to get the best from the software...

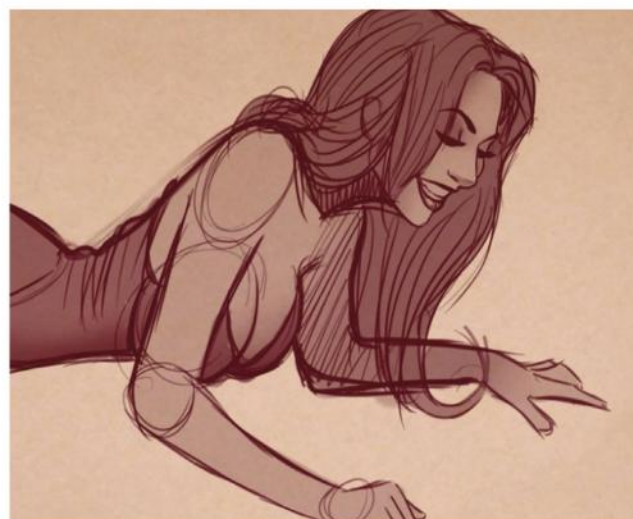
## 1 The Lagoon's tools

The Lagoon UI is an arc-shaped palette that features six core elements. From left to right they are: Interface Controls, Tools/Views, Brushes, Colors, Edit and Files. Each element on the Lagoon has a series of shortcut options that you can access. For example, you can select your favourite brushes, the Lasso and other editable tools, rulers, layers, save your work and more.



## 2 Selecting tools and actions

Click and hold over any of these tools and you'll be presented with more options. To select any of these, just drag your mouse or stylus pen towards one of them and release when the one you want is highlighted. Once you've memorised the Lagoon's features, accessing any desired option will be instinctive, which will enhance your painting workflow.



## 3 Get the sketchbook feel

Depending on what type of artist you are, you can choose to hide everything on the screen apart from the Lagoon. This gives you a decent space for either sketching, painting or creating any style of artwork. Just hover over the Interface Controls element and select Title Bar Off. Then press Tab on your keyboard to hide everything.

### Artist PROFILE

**Paris Christou**  
COUNTRY: Cyprus

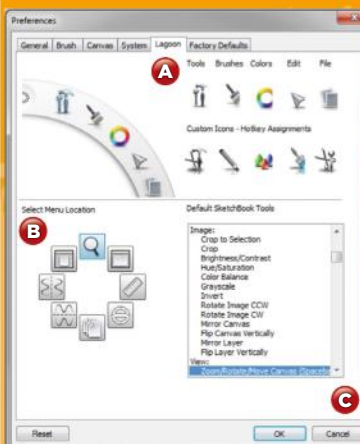


Paris is a 2D animator, illustrator and teacher at ToonBox

Studio. He's also a full-time YouTuber who's best known for his popular cartoon pin-up character Cherry. Paris is also the Founder of ToonBoxStudio.com.

[www.toonboxstudio.com](http://www.toonboxstudio.com)

### CUSTOMISE THE LAGOON INTERFACE



#### A. The Preference window

To customise Lagoon, go to SketchBook Pro > Preferences or Edit > Preferences on the main toolbar. In the pop-up window, select the Lagoon tab. The top half features all six options of the Lagoon.

#### B. Select tools and actions

Select any of the icons and you'll see the sub-options in the bottom half. To the right of them you'll see a section called Default Sketchbook Tools, which lists all the tools and actions available in SketchBook Pro.

#### C. Replace a tool or action

Select a sub-option, then scroll through the list to replace it with the tool or action you prefer. Artists never use every tool an app offers. I replace any tools or actions I don't need, to speed up my workflow.





## SKETCHBOOK PRO

## GET TO KNOW THE BRUSH PALETTE

Next, we explain how organising your brushes and tools in SketchBook Pro and managing their properties will improve your creative workflow

“All the brushes are displayed in one easy-to-access toolbar”

**S**ketchnBook Pro comes with a variety of brushes and tools to fit the needs of every artist or designer of all levels of proficiency. All the brushes are displayed in one easy-to-access toolbar called the Brush palette.

This palette offers all the basic tools with simple adjustable properties for you to enjoy working with. The icons within

the Brush Palette are graphically visual and easy to identify, which all helps to contribute to a smooth and user-friendly creative workflow.

In this part of our guide you'll learn how to locate the Brush palette within SketchBook Pro, how to open the Brush Properties panel for each brush and how to organise your brushes to improve your painting experience.

## 1 Finding the brushes

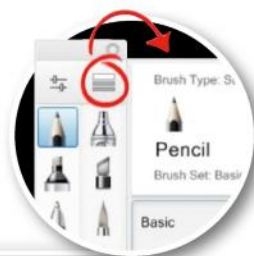
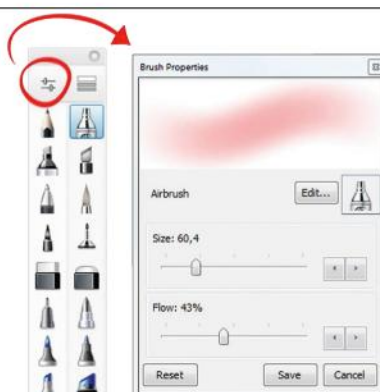
The Brush palette is a window that's located on the left-hand side of the SketchBook Pro screen by default. If you can't see it, just click the Windows tab on the main top toolbar to switch it on. The palette consists of two rows of many tools such as pencils, brushes, synthetic brushes, erasers and smear/smudge brushes. At the top of the Brush palette are two key icons, explained in the next two steps.

## 2 Explore Brush Properties

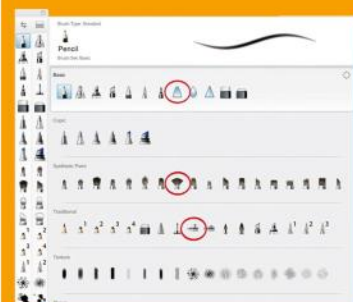
The icon on the left opens the Brush Properties window. Once you select a specific brush or tool from the palette and then click the Brush Properties button, a pop-up window will appear. This window enables you to adjust the properties of the selected brush/tool to your liking. Each brush will be slightly different, but it's straightforward enough to adjust its properties.

## 3 Accessing more brush tools

The icon on the right opens the Brush Library. You'll see another pop-up window presenting every single brush and tool that the software has to offer. There are 100 preset brushes and tools that have been specifically designed for different types of artists. Take the time to scroll through all the tools and test out their properties to see which tool fits your workflow and style.



## ORGANISING YOUR BRUSH PALETTE



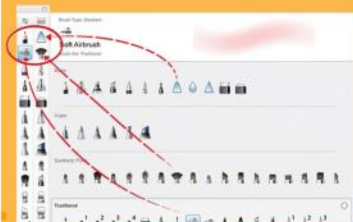
### A. Find your favourites

SketchBook Pro enables you to move or replace brushes and tools in the Brush palette for quicker access to the ones you use. Click the top-right icon on the Brush palette to access the Brush Library and locate all the common tools you need.



### B. Replacing a brush

Simply click and hold a brush icon from the Brush Library, and drag it over to the Brush palette above the tool that you don't need, then release. You'll see that the selected brush has replaced the unwanted brush and been placed in the same spot on the palette.



### C. Moving a brush

To move a brush within the palette, open the Brush Library and locate the brush that you want to move. The process is the same as in step B: just click and hold on the relevant brush, drag it over to the desired spot on the palette, and then release to place it there.



## SKETCHBOOK PRO

# CUSTOMISE AND SET UP BRUSHES

More is never enough when it comes to art! In addition to selecting the tools you want, you can customise any brush in SketchBook Pro or create your own. Here's how...

**T**he latest SketchBook Pro is an all-in one package crammed full of tools and brushes to satisfy any type of artist, giving you plenty of helpful digital assets to complete your projects.

Although the software provides you with all the tools you need, SketchBook Pro also gives you the power to edit and customise an existing brush, or create

your own unique brush, and the possibilities here are almost endless.

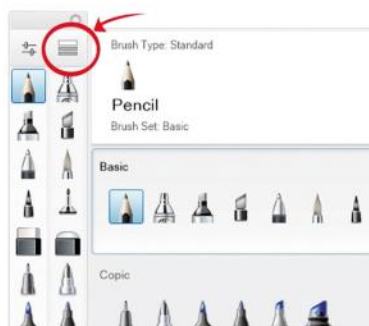
In this short step-by-step guide, you'll learn the basics of creating a new brush, where to customise the brush's properties, how to best name your new brush and change the brush icon, and finally how to add it to the Brush Palette.

I promise it's not as complicated as all that might sound!

**“You can edit and customise brushes – the possibilities are almost endless”**

## 1 Selecting a specific brush

Press 3 and right-click to open the Brush palette. Then select a brush – either one that you want to modify or one that is similar to what you want to create. For this example, I'll select the default Pencil tool, with the intention of creating a new custom pencil. Once you've selected your tool, click the Show Brush Library button located at the top right-hand corner of the Brush palette.



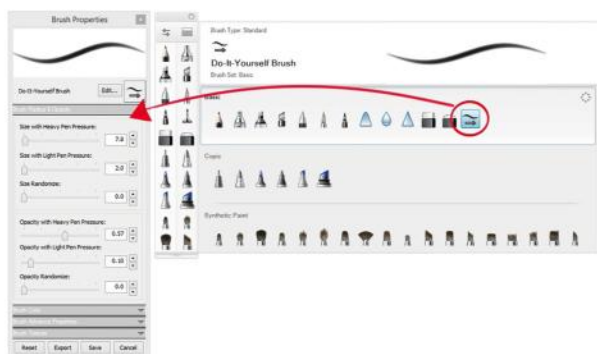
## 2 Creating a new brush

Next, locate the row of tools in the Brush Library that features the brush you've chosen, hold down your mouse button over the circle of dots that appears around it, and then select the New Brush option to create a new brush. A Create Do-it-yourself Brush window will appear, and this gives you the option to select the type of brush that you want to create. Make sure you choose the Current Brush option.

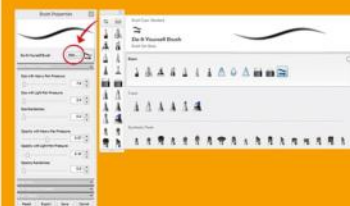


## 3 Customising the brush properties

Your newly created brush will be found at the end of the row in the Brush Library that you accessed in step 2. Double-click the new brush icon to open the Brush Properties dialogue, which will give you many options to play with. This dialogue enables you to edit the Size, Pressure, Opacity, Color, Spacing, Texture and more. When done, hit the Save button and you can start using your new brush.



## NAME AND CHANGE THE BRUSH ICON



### A. Identify Custom Brush

Open the Brush Properties dialogue for your new brush. Click the Edit button, which opens the Identify Custom Brush window. This enables you to give the brush a title and assign an icon to it, to keep your tools organised and help you find what you want.



### B. Selecting an icon

You now should be looking at the Identify Custom Brush window. The first option is to name your brush. Below is SketchBook Pro's massive Icons library: scroll through the series and find one that fits best with your new brush. Once you've chosen, hit the Save button to complete the customisation.



### C. Adding to the Palette

You will have a new brush sitting in the Brush library. To add it to the Brush palette, click and hold on it, drag it to the palette and release on top of any brush. It will replace the existing brush in the palette, so drag your new tool over one you don't need.



## SKETCHBOOK PRO

# TAP INTO THE POWER OF LAYERS

Think layers are a luxury? Find out how layers can help you take your work in SketchBook Pro from initial sketch to finished artwork

**L**ayers are an integral part of SketchBook Pro's flexibility. If you've used other software such as Photoshop you'll be familiar with the concept, but if not, imagine a layer as a sheet of glass which can be stacked on top of others. Layers are the building blocks of a piece of artwork.

The key is that each layer is normally transparent except where it contains an

image element. For example, if I draw or paint a clear blue sky on one piece of glass (a layer), add another piece of glass (a new layer) on top, and then paint a forest scene on the top layer, I'll still be able to see the blue sky on the layer below, peeking through the unpainted parts of my forest layer. That's the power of layers.

Okay, let's see how SketchBook Pro helps you manage your layers.

“Layers are the building blocks of a piece of artwork”

## GETTING STARTED WITH LAYERS



### A. Blueprint sketch

I prefer to start by sketching loosely on layer 1, scribbling out a blueprint to design my artwork. In this phase I can experiment, enjoy making mistakes and trying to solve them. At this stage I don't stress over details or getting any of the lines perfect, but instead focus on the forms, shapes, gestures and overall composition.



### B. Creating the line art

I reduce the Opacity of the sketch layer to about 50 per cent and create a new layer above this layer. This is the clean-up stage where I'll carefully draw the clean lines over the rough sketch with a black pencil using a feathering technique. I'm careful to observe the blueprint below and concentrate on the thickness and value of my line art.



### C. Colouring the artwork

Now that I have the clean line art, I turn off the rough sketch layer and create a new layer between the line art layer and the rough sketch layer. The new layer will be my colour layer, and I use the Round brush and the Airbrush to colour my artwork. Once I've finished my artwork, I merge all the layers together and save the image.

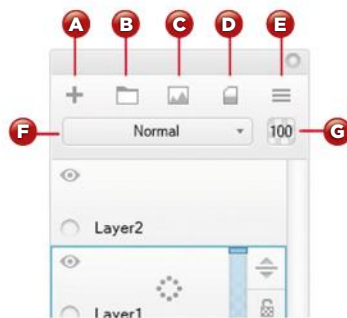
## 1 Background layer

The background layer enables you to change the colour – and therefore the fundamental mood – of your canvas. To do this in SketchBook Pro, you simply click the white circle on the background layer to open the colour wheel, and then select a colour of your choice. Turning off the eye icon on the background layer will give you a transparent background, which may be useful in some circumstances.



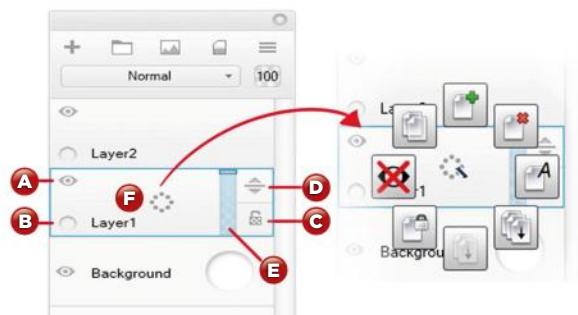
## 2 The Layers panel

All the features on the Layers panel are shortcuts designed to help you manage your SketchBook Pro layers. They are as follows: Add a new layer (A); Add a new group (B); Add an image (C); Clear anything on the selected layer (D); Open a menu of all the options of the Layer Editor (E); Open a menu of all the Blend Modes (F); and finally adjust the Opacity of the selected layer (G). Once you get used to them they're really useful.



## 3 Your layer options

Here are all the features on a layer that you can manipulate in SketchBook Pro: Hide/View a layer (A); Colour label the layer (B); Lock the Transparency (C); Change the Opacity of the layer (D); Drag a layer to change the stacking order (E); Click and hold down to access the layer options (F), then click any of these icons: Add Layer, Delete Layer, Rename Layer, Merge All, Merge with Below, Lock Layer, Hide, Duplicate Layer.





## SKETCHBOOK PRO

# USING LOCK TRANSPARENCY

Take advantage of the power of SketchBook Pro's Lock Transparency function and make life easier when you're rendering or colouring your artwork

**A**long with all the amazing user-friendly tools and options you'll find in the current version of SketchBook Pro for Windows and Mac, the powerful Lock Transparency function can make your life much easier and help improve your workflow when creating artwork.

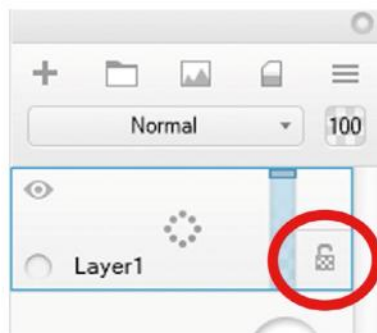
In this guide you'll learn where to find this function, how to colour your line-art

and even render any element you either draw or paint on the canvas using Lock Transparency. The name isn't very helpful: it doesn't so much lock anything as mask transparent areas of a layer. All you really need to remember is that when it's active, you can only affect content that already exists on the layer, not draw or paint in new areas. This is a basic formula to help you better understand this function.

“When it's active, you can affect only content that already exists on the layer”

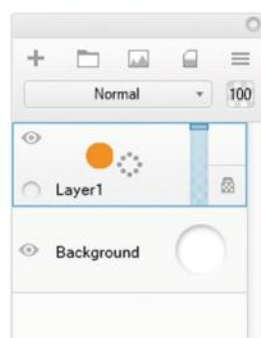
## 1 Locate the Lock Transparency option

The Lock Transparency function is located at the bottom-right of each layer – the padlock icon. This function enables you to edit anything you draw or paint on a layer, which can speed up your workflow significantly. Bear in mind that when you draw or paint, it's always best to separate your primary elements on to different layers before applying the Lock Transparency function.



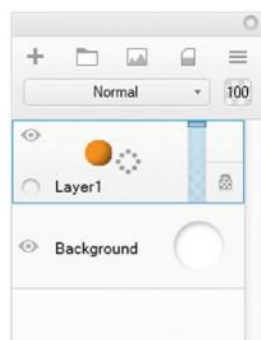
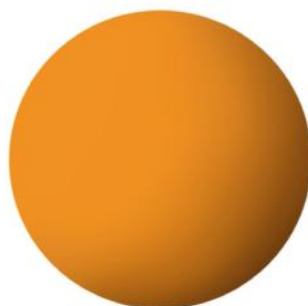
## 2 Paint an element and lock its transparency

Select a paint brush and paint an orange circle on a layer. If you then enable Lock Transparency on this layer, you can paint only inside the orange circle. This means you'll keep your edges nice and sharp. However, you won't be able to erase the orange circle as long as Lock Transparency is enabled, because this function enables you only to add to the layer and not subtract from it.



## 3 Render the painted element

Switch to the Airbrush tool or a soft Round brush and choose a dark brown colour. Begin painting around the side of the orange circle and you'll soon see the effect of Lock Transparency. Notice how accurate the edges are: your paint stays within the painted circle. This technique keeps your painting clean, enabling you to focus on blending and colouring your artwork.



## TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR COLOURING



### A. Get your layers organised first!

My layers are always organised by having a layer for each major element in my artwork. In this example I have a layer for my line-art at the top and a layer for the subsequent base colours of my character's skin and hair. This means I have full control over editing each element separately.



### B. Colouring the line-art

The next step is to enable the Lock Transparency function for my line-art layer, which gives me the option to colour just the outline of my character. Select the base colour of the skin and go slightly darker. Notice now as I paint the skin outlines, it gels the lines with the skin colour. I then repeat the process for the line-art of the eyes, lips and hair.



### C. Add light and shadows to the base colours

For the final stage, I Lock Transparency for the base colour layers, take an airbrush and start rendering by shading in the tones. My main focus is to play with the edges of the base colours to reflect light and shadow. You can always go back into the line-art layer and adjust the colours to fit the tones.



## SKETCHBOOK PRO

## BRING YOUR ART TO ANIMATED LIFE

Learn the basics of the fledgling Flipbook feature in SketchBook Pro 7, and with a bit of planning you can use it to produce an effective animation

**T**he animation Flipbook feature in SketchBook Pro 7 can now be considered a bit of an experiment from the program's developers. It's best to see the tool as a work-in-progress project, because while the brush tools and user-friendly functions are impressive, this new feature is still limited. But it's worth spending a little time investigating.

You can't export your animation as a video file and the layers system is very basic, but to be fair, this is the beginning of a feature that could very well lead to the next generation of "tradigital" animation tools. In this brief introduction I'll guide you through the animation side of SketchBook Pro, reveal how to animate with the Flipbook, and explain how to handle the new layers system.

“This is a feature that could lead to the next generation of animation tools”

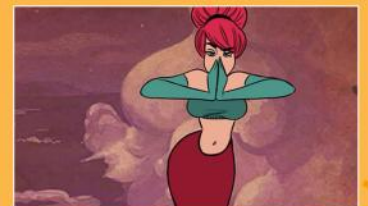
## PREPARE YOUR ART FOR ANIMATION

**A. Planning your scene**

Plan out your sequence beforehand on paper. This will help you to figure out the timing and spacing of your scene. I like to sketch out thumbnails and keep this stage very rough and loose, which means I can focus on the poses and the silhouettes. You'll also be able to work out how many frames a sequence will consist of.

**B. Sketching**

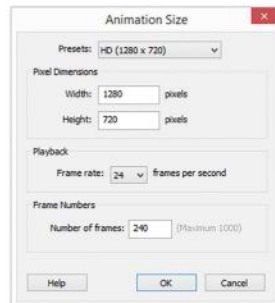
Because the layer system is very limited, select the mid-ground and start sketching out the rough animation along the timeline. Always refer back to your thumbnails and try to stay as loose as possible. Once you've completed the rough animation, take the Soft Eraser and gently erase 50 per cent of each frame to reduce its opacity.

**C. Cleaning up and colour**

Tidy up the rough animation by selecting the foreground and going over every keyframe along the timeline. This stage can take time and effort to keep the lines consistent: if you rush it, the forms will either expand or shrink. Once you've cleaned the frames, erase every keyframe on the mid-ground and add your chosen colours.

**1 Set up your project**

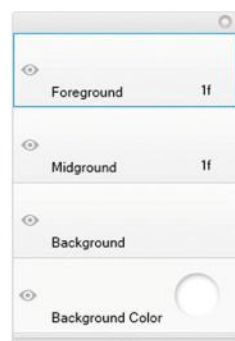
Select File from the main toolbar and choose New Flipbook. The project panel will appear, containing a range of properties to choose from. The presets are the pixel dimensions of your project, and you can also input the dimensions to create your own custom size. The next option is the frame rate or how many frames per second your animation will be. The final option is to decide how many frames your scene will consist of.

**2 The animation timeline**

The Timeline is a series of frames from 0 up to the number of frames that a scene consists of. The animation is played back frame by frame along the timeline at the frame rate you selected in the previous step. On the left of the timeline are the keyframe options, where you can add and delete a key. On the right are the playback controls.

**3 The Flipbook layers system**

The layers system is very different from what you'll find in any other software. You can't add or delete a layer, but you do have three specific layers to use for your Flipbook animation. The background layer is a static layer across the timeline for you to draw and paint the environment of your scene. The foreground and mid-ground layers are related to each frame on the timeline. **END**





# Sketchbook

## Ken Lashley

The comic book artist opens up his sketchbook and reveals how it helps him get out of his comfort zone

### Artist PROFILE

**Ken Lashley**

COUNTRY: US



Ken, otherwise known as Ledkilla, has worked in the world of comic books and illustration for well over 20 years, drawing celebrated characters such as Batman, Superman and the X-Men. But he's also collaborated with high-profile companies such as Hasbro, Lucasfilm and Mattel, creating artwork for their toy ranges and events.

[www.ledkilla.tumblr.com](http://www.ledkilla.tumblr.com)

#### MIX 'N' MATCH

"I like this one because these things aren't supposed to go together, which makes for a fun sketch. I find that the better you can handle the finishing style, the more believable it will come across."

#### EVIL QUEEN

"I was looking at some Star Wars concept work that day and this was born. I do work for lots of different companies and although it seems like a ton of different styles it's really all the same. A drawing is a drawing – it's the focus of a certain piece that brings it to life".





### I SEE YOU

"I was working on pushing the perspective a bit this day. I didn't go as far as I could have, but it's a start. I think each of us does things within our comfort zone - I try to get out of that when I doodle or sketch."

### TROUBLEMAKER

"I've been doing comics in the traditional sense for years, so when I sketch I go over the top. When I work on Superman or Batman you don't get to create crazy stuff like this very often, so when the mood strikes me, I let loose with the pencil."

"Each of us does things within our comfort zone - I try to get out of that when I doodle or sketch"





# Sketchbook



## THIRD EYE

"This one grew from a conversation with my daughter. We often draw together; she gives me ideas and I have five minutes to draw something. These challenges really push me. I don't draw the things I'm good at - I'm drawing whatever comes to her mind."



## CRANKY KID

"I draw with my kids all the time and what comes out is usually a mood taken from one of their stories. This one was from a cranky day at school. She loved this one. I like it, too."

## FILLING THE ROOM

"I draw these sheets all the time. It's the 'first thing in my head' kind of drawing. Some fun things come out during one of these - I give myself 40 minutes and the idea is to fill every corner."



"When I let myself go, some strange things happen"



## FEMALE LOKI

"I was doing some covers for Marvel, and while looking for reference I came upon a female Loki image. Later that night I started doodling and this was born. This is more like what I do when I draw comics, but it's a bit more cartoony. I like this one because it shows a bit more range. I'm known for my crazy energy and power in my work - here, I tried to show a bit more emotion. It's a work in progress."

## GROOVY FUN

"When I let myself go, some strange things happen. Of all my fast five- to 10-minute sketches, this one struck a chord. It's far removed from what I'm known for. I think that's great. Sure, I have a long way to go, but as long as I'm drawing it's all fun."

## THAT AIN'T NATURAL

"I like to stretch things, and here's an example of that crazy anatomy. These can pay off in later professional work - one never knows what the next gig will be."





# DOES DRAWING COMICS PAY?

We ask indie comic artists about the industry and whether they're able to earn a decent crust...

**WT** With the buzz that surrounds superhero movies continuing unabated, it seems on the face of it that there's never been a better time to be drawing comics.

Let's crunch some numbers. Christopher Nolan's Batman trilogy brought in nearly \$1.2 billion for Warner Bros, the parent company of DC Comics. The 2012 Avengers film earned \$623 million and in May 2015 Avengers: Age of Ultron came out with a tale of \$191 million in its first week.

But how much do the films actually help comic sales? According to US sales figures, in the month Age of Ultron came out, the comic Uncanny Avengers Ultron Forever 1 took \$201,331, while Uncanny Avengers 4 made \$186,736 in sales. The industry was boosted with the launch of Secret Wars, which sold over 500,000 copies in its first week, and sales of the top 300 books were up 20 per cent compared to May 2014. Of course, these numbers are dwarfed by the film revenues, but they seem healthy.



Matt Taylor draws Wolf, a fantasy/crime noir comic series published by Image.







In *The Woods*, drawn by Michael Dialynas, an entire school is ripped from reality and transplanted into some woods on another planet.

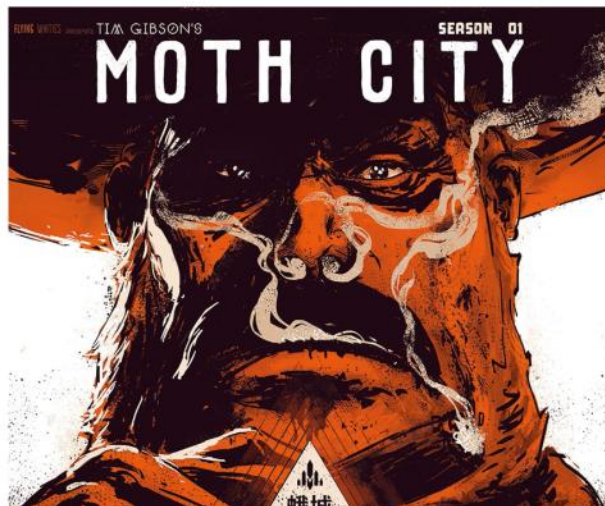
What about the artists – are they seeing much trickle-down of funds from these huge films? No, not really. A survey on the site SKTCHD.com in mid-June 2015 showed that nearly half of comic artists who responded were earning less than \$12,000 a year from comics, and that 28 per cent are on less than \$100 per page. That's borderline poverty.

"I'm new to the industry, but it does feel like there's a lot of work for not a huge return in comics," says Matt Taylor, who draws *Wolf*, published by Image. "A common recurring phrase I've heard is that you do it 'for the love of comics'. Which may be true, but at the end of the day you still have to put food on the table."

## THE DREAM OF ROYALTIES

Like many other artists, England-based Matt takes commissions outside of comics to bolster his income. One half-page illustration for *The New Yorker* pays as well as 24 comic pages. Because *Wolf* is published by Image, which allows artists and writers to own their work, Taylor will earn royalties from the book as it keeps selling, and if it's snapped up by a film company then he might make a fortune from it... one day.

**“You do it ‘for the love of comics’, but you still have to put food on the table”**



Tim Gibson's web comic *Moth City* is set during the Chinese civil war in the 1930s.

The creator-owned indie model seems to be emerging as a favourite among artists – witness the success of *Saga*, drawn by Fiona Staples, for instance (see page 68). The downside is that you can end up waiting three or four months for your royalties to come through.

Like Matt, New Zealander Tim Gibson became a comic artist out of sheer love for the genre. He was a 3D and concept artist



at Weta, then became a freelance illustrator, but always wanted to do comics. A grant in his home country enabled him to take a year ➔



## INDUSTRY INSIGHT

### MICHAEL DIALYNAS

*Based in Greece, Michael draws *The Woods* for Boom! Studios*

#### So what's it like to be working for Boom?

They are very laid-back and easy-going. *The Woods* is a project that will run for 36 issues, so that's nine trade paperbacks. I have a page rate and partnership cut of whatever is made. They have a pretty good deal.

#### What's your view on the way the comic industry works?

The industry is at a high right now with creator-owned books booming compared to a few years back. But it's a weird place for artists compared to the '90s, when we had major selling power and people would say, "Have you seen the new issue of *X-Men*?" Jim Lee's art is fricking awesome!" Then buy 10 copies and put them in a safe.

#### What's changed?

Things have shifted to the other extreme, where writers are held as the sole creators of comics and the artists are interchangeable. It's odd when you think that we work in a visual medium and most artists work all day pencilling and inking one page.

#### What would you change?

Artists should have higher page-rates, even if it's an advance of royalties. Because of the time it takes to make each panel communicate to the reader, design the characters, build the world the story takes place in and act out every emotion on the page. Comic artists have the role of a whole film crew and should be treated as such.

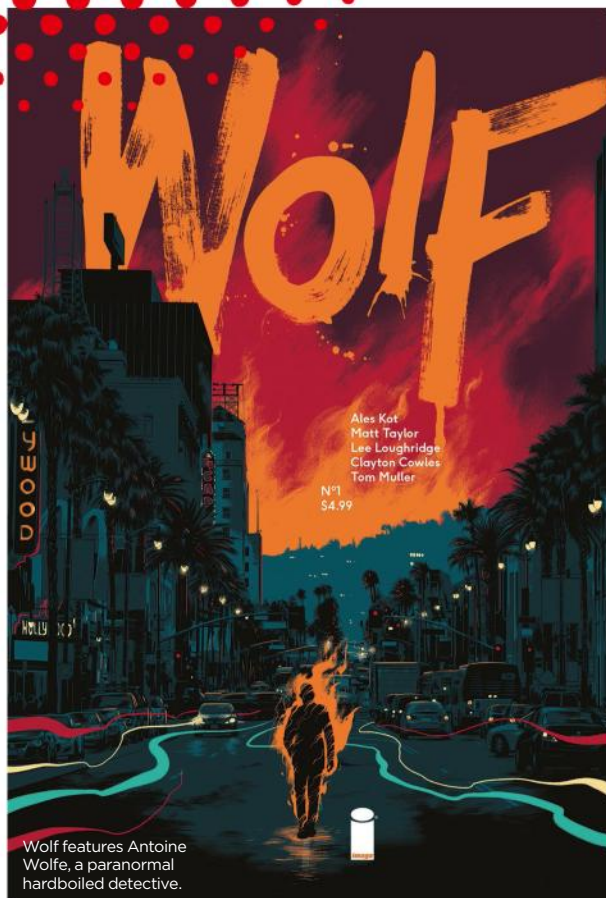
#### What else are you doing?

In December [2015] I had my childhood dream come true when the first issue of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* that I drew came out from IDW. I'm psyched!

*Michael was laid off during the financial crisis in Greece, so pitched an idea to Dark Horse and became a comic artist.*

[www.madart84.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.madart84.blogspot.co.uk)





➔ off to produce Moth City. Luckily for Tim, it was snapped up by the subscription-based web comic publisher Thrillbent, and by online comics outlet comiXology.

## THE WEB COMIC ROUTE

As a publisher of a web comic, you have total control of your creation, but you also take all the risk of getting it out there, and making it all happen takes a huge effort. "You might control your own destiny a bit more than an artist waiting to be

commissioned or assigned to a comic," says Tim. "But you also can't succeed without all the associated tasks of running a web-business: regular blogging, site management, social media outreach and store management."

He adds: "There's no guarantee that you'll ever see any money from them, and building a site and audience that will allow eventual income is a dark art of its own." And like Matt, Tim finds that a comic page earns him between 10 and 20 per cent of

A page from Matt Taylor's self-published graphic novel *The Great Salt Lake*.

what he would normally receive from an illustration commission.

Dennis Calero is an artist who's seen comics go from page to screen. He helped Platinum Studios to present its property *Cowboys & Aliens* to the film companies, and saw the fallout when the management and creators wrangled over the royalties. Today he writes and draws *The Suit*, which he owns and which appears in Dark Horse Presents.



**“A writer is paid roughly the same amount as the artist, even though the drawing takes a lot longer”**

"Publishers are reaching out to foreign markets in order to save a buck," Dennis says. "Now, there are some incredible European, South American and Asian artists who are kicking a lot of ass. But there are a plethora of mediocre illustrators who just aren't cutting the mustard and are clearly only getting work because they're charging 30 cents on the dollar."

Artists today feel undervalued compared to writers. The writer on a comic is paid roughly the same amount as the artist, even though drawing it takes a lot longer than writing it. A writer can appear in five or six titles a month; an artist features only in one,



Moth City by Tim Gibson. "It has bio-weapons, the Chinese Nationalist army, communism and a cowboy," he says.





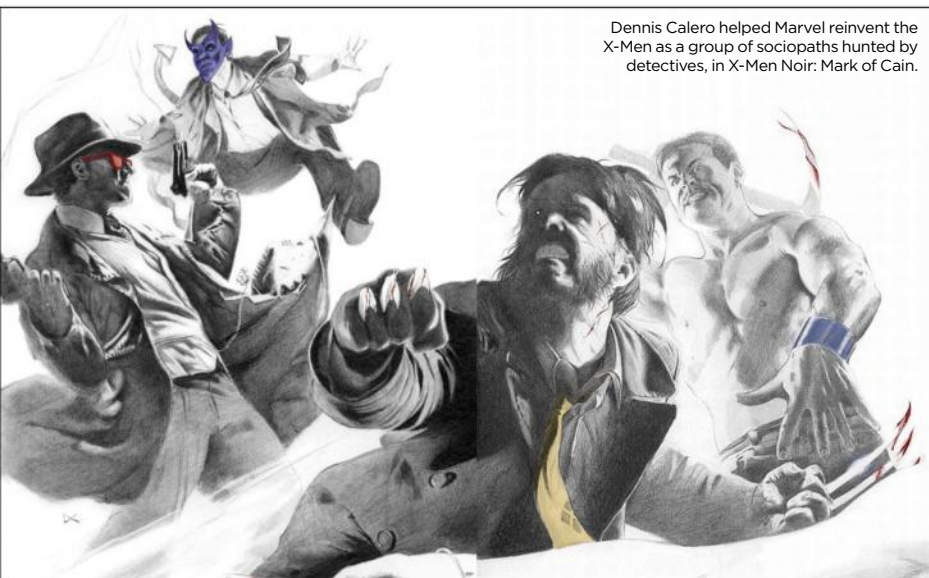
Tim Gibson took a year out from his usual freelancing to create Moth City, the online comic.



Above and left: Paul Dialynas used shifts in colour palettes to help pace the storytelling in *The Woods* from Boom! Studios.



Below: Dennis Calero drew four chapters of the free online comic *Devil Inside*, written by actor Todd Stashwick.



Dennis Calero helped Marvel reinvent the X-Men as a group of sociopaths hunted by detectives, in *X-Men Noir: Mark of Cain*.

or maybe two if they're working all hours. Yet the writer might walk away with many times what the artist has earned.

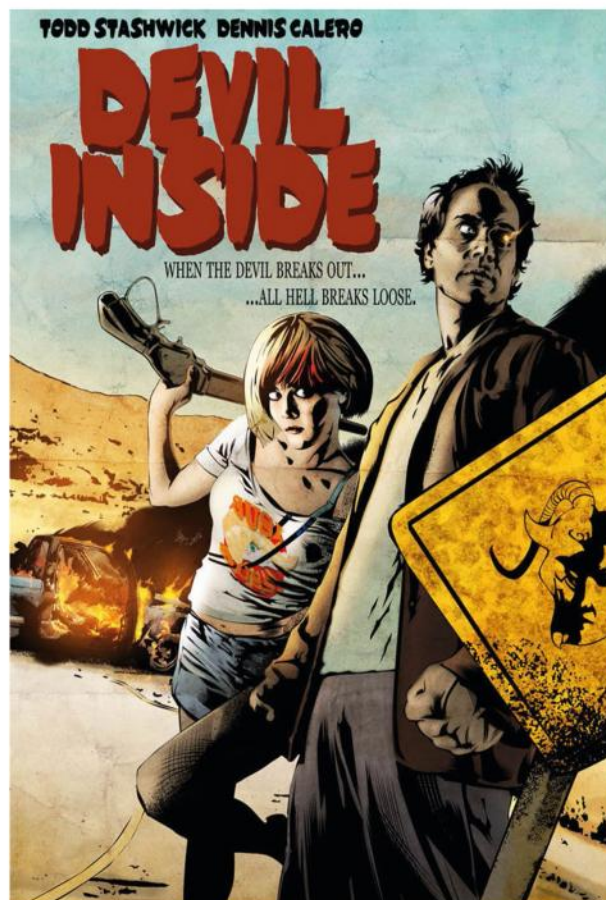
## HUMAN RESOURCES

Disney has owned Marvel Comics since 2009, and some fear that comic artists could soon be like animators: faceless workstation fodder, toiling away, low paid and unknown to the audience.

"I hope eventually the idea that characters are all that matter in this genre will fall by the wayside and publishers will realise it's the people that make these funny books that

count and who are the backbone of any creative company. A resource to be grown and nurtured, not exploited," says Dennis.

With all the reboots we've seen from Marvel and DC, and with indie comics thriving one minute and diving the next, it's hard to tell whether comic industry bosses really know what's going on. Online and print publishing models continue to shift. Yet huge amounts of money are coming in from superhero films at the moment. Let's hope more of it will be wisely invested – in the comic artists who give life to the superheroes in the first place. **END**





# Sketchbook

## Randy Bishop

When he's not painting or storyboarding, Randy likes to sketch kooky characters...

### SURPRISE

"I found a photo of a girl wearing this expression and had to draw it."

### Artist PROFILE

**Randy Bishop**

LOCATION: US



Randy is a character designer and illustrator who lives with his wife and children in Idaho Falls, Idaho. He's been working as a freelance artist for the past several years, primarily as a character designer for animation and games, but has also worked as an illustrator, creating artwork for the publishing and education industries.  
[www.randybishopart.com](http://www.randybishopart.com)

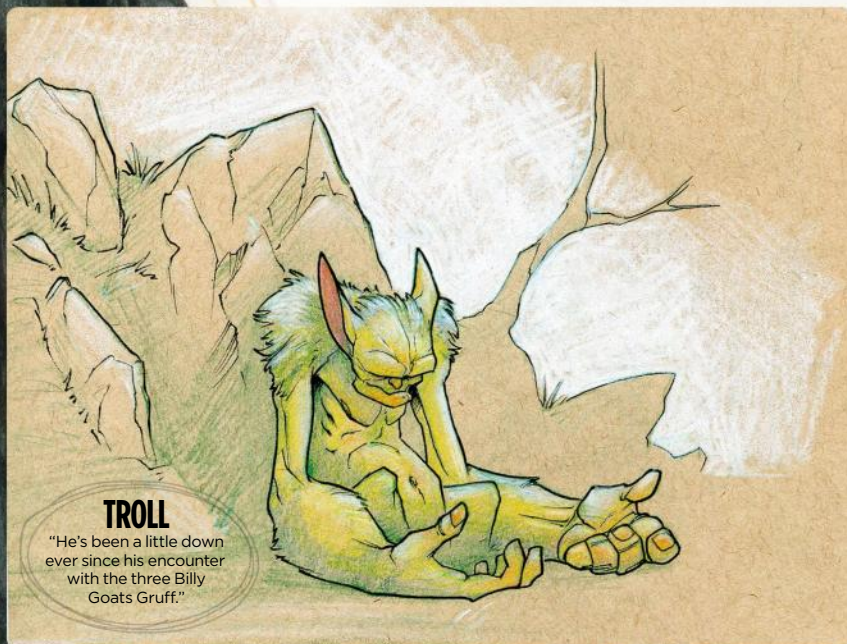
### WIGS

"I did a few sketches of skulls wearing wigs. I'm not sure why."



### TROLL

"He's been a little down ever since his encounter with the three Billy Goats Gruff."







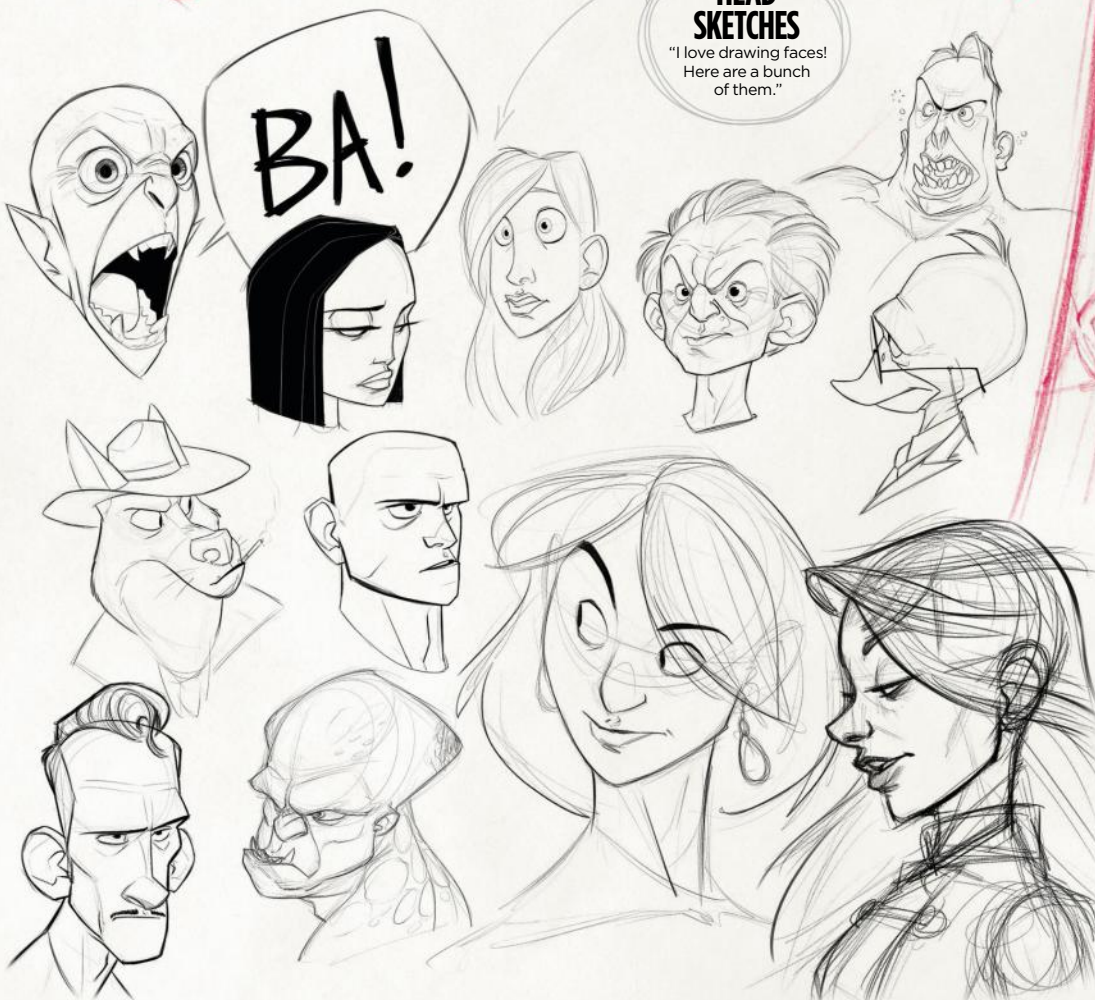
### SHE'S A GIRL

"It took me a minute to decide whether I was drawing a man or a woman when I was drawing this. She's a little ambiguous, but I kind of like it."



### HEAD SKETCHES

"I love drawing faces! Here are a bunch of them."



### CONTROL YOUR CANINE

"I wanted to practise drawing two characters interacting. I was seeing a lot of photos of girls holding little dogs and decided to do something similar."

"I was seeing a lot of photos of girls holding little dogs and decided to do something similar"



# Sketchbook



## THIS IS SERIOUS

"A couple of random dudes from my sketchbook."



## FULL-MOON THIEVERY

"I drew this around Halloween time. It was meant to be an illustration, but I never finished it."

## HOW YOU DOIN'?

"I was thinking about how much we could miss out on when we're completely absorbed by our devices. Then I drew this."







**YOU'RE CUTE**

"I'm a big fan of English fashion. This was an attempt to capture my favourite parts of it."

**PRETTY PROFILE**

"There's something gorgeous about a strong profile. I absolutely love drawing women with chiselled noses and chins."

**BOWLER**

"I'm a fan of bowler hats. I'm also a fan of arbitrary skin colours."



*"I absolutely love drawing women with chiselled noses and chins"*



**WHITE ELEPHANT**

"This was an invitation to a Christmas party that my wife and I threw last year."







**LOOK OUT!**  
Conan's back in  
*Conan the Slayer*, and  
Lee Bermejo's cover  
captures his ferocity.

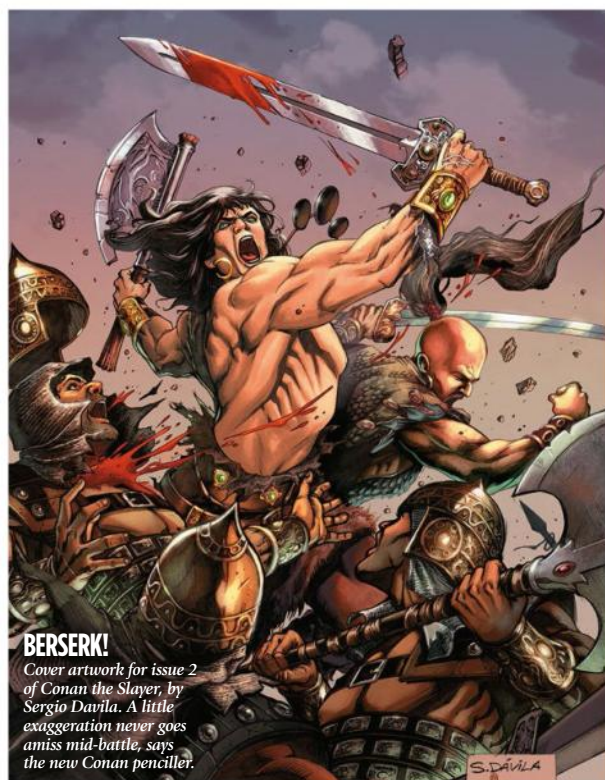


**"HITHER CAME CONAN,  
THE CIMMERIAN, BLACK-  
HAired, SULLEN-EYED, SWORD  
IN HAND, A THIEF, A REAVER,  
A SLAYER, WITH GIGANTIC  
MELANCHOLIES AND  
GIGANTIC MIRTH, TO TREAD  
THE JEWELLED THRONES OF  
THE EARTH UNDER HIS  
SANDALLED FEET"**

**J**ust that line, taken from Robert E Howard's very first Conan story, "The Phoenix on the Sword," is enough to set the heart of a comic or fantasy artist racing. And, since the character first appeared in the pulp magazine *Weird Tales* in 1932, dozens of artists have drawn or painted him – including many of the greats.

The latest to render the great barbarian is Spanish artist Sergio Davila. He's on board with Dark Horse to draw its brand new series. The artist is relishing the freedom he has to visualise the Hyborian age. "I'm having great fun working in this fantasy world. It allows me to invent things, overdo some characters, and take some of the action to the limit in a way you wouldn't be able to in real life. And all in my very own style," he says.

Sergio's Conan has a meaty, muscular look to him, reminiscent of Marvel's Conan of the 1970s and '80s. In titles back then – like *Conan the Barbarian* and *The Savage Sword of Conan* – the pencil artists Barry Windsor-Smith, John Buscema, Gil Kane and Pablo Marcos experienced a similar



**BERSERK!**  
Cover artwork for issue 2 of *Conan the Slayer*, by Sergio Davila. A little exaggeration never goes amiss mid-battle, says the new Conan penciller.

kind of exuberance. The world that Robert E Howard imagined was full of warfare, sorcerers, monsters and villains, and Marvel gave its artists lots of scope.

Like Sergio, but with 45 years of experience drawing Conan, the Peruvian artist Pablo Marcos revelled in the same sense of possibility. "He's a fictitious hero, and that gave me all the freedom to create a lot of action," says Pablo. "Exotic girls are always around him. I like Conan's surroundings, and it's easy to create scenery, monsters, animals and fighters. There are no limits. I really enjoy doing it."



### SAVAGE SWORD

Pablo still paints Conan commissions, but back in the '70s he drew the comic strips that Marvel syndicated to newspapers all over the US. His work appeared in *Savage Sword of Conan* for many years, and he also inked the pencils of another Conan great, John Buscema.

"The story I enjoyed drawing most was 'The White Tiger of Vendhya'," says Pablo. "It had two fantastic elements: an ➤





➔ agile feline, and a strong warrior with big muscles."

During the same era, another breed of artist was helping define Conan's image. While those pencilling the comics told of a world of weapons, women, warriors and wonder, oil painters like Frank Frazetta, Boris Vallejo and Ken Kelly showed us Conan's battle rage on the canvas. Their paintings appeared on book and comic covers in the '60s, '70s and '80s, and their vision was of a single-minded warrior capable of great strength and brutality.

Boris Vallejo painted the very first cover of *Savage Sword of Conan* in 1974, then published by the Marvel imprint Curtis.



"I was very much into bodybuilding and muscular warriors, so painting covers for the Conan comics and books was very appealing to



#### GOLDEN GANESH

Julie Bell's impressive "metal flesh" technique appeared on the cover of *Savage Sword of Conan*.

#### PROTECTOR

Boris Vallejo loved painting a mighty, muscular Conan defending a sexy woman.

#### THE CONAN COMIC TIMELINE

Some of the barbarian's highlights, beginning with his pulp days right through to the 21st century slayer

#### CRUCIFIED

This classic Conan image by Boris Vallejo appeared on issue 5 of *Savage Sword of Conan*.



“It’d lost all connection to the source material. I remember seeing him drawn with ridiculous giant battle axes”

me,” he recalls. “Most people, especially males, like the simple concept of a guy who can take care of himself and defeat any foe.”

Perhaps it’s the oils and the Renaissance-inspired technique that gave covers by these artists such a visceral feel. Sometimes they show Conan suffering in biblical fashion. In one famous Frank Frazetta work he’s chained to two columns – like Samson – and faces a giant serpent. For issue 5 of *The Savage Sword of Conan*, Boris painted him crucified in the desert to accompany the classic story “A Witch Shall Be Born.”

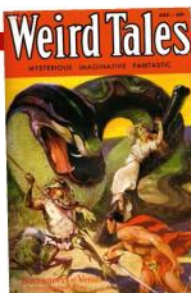
It was through his work that Boris met his future wife Julie Bell, another painter, who later became the first woman to paint



Conan for book and comic covers. Bright and fanciful, her work brought with it a special technique. “I was excited to do the Marvel covers where they wanted action,” says Julie. “They wanted me to use the ‘metal flesh’ look that I was becoming known for and had painted in Heavy Metal covers.”

#### FEEDING IMAGINATIONS

Marvel’s Conan fed the imaginations of teenage boys for three decades, but it’s worth noting that Robert E Howard actually wrote only 21 stories featuring the character, though five further incomplete



1932

Texan writer Robert E Howard’s first Conan story, *The Phoenix on the Sword*, appears in the December 1932 issue of pulp magazine *Weird Tales* with cover art by J Allen St John.



1936

*Weird Tales* carried its last Robert E Howard story – *Red Nails* – in July, a month after the author’s suicide in Cross Plains, Texas. This time the cover was painted by Margaret Brundage.





### CONQUEROR

Comic artist Cary Nord cites Frank Frazetta as the defining Conan painter. Frazetta painted this iconic paperback cover in 1966.

pieces are part of the pantheon. Only so much could be done with Conan in the Marvel style. The colour comic Conan the Barbarian ended in 1993, followed by its black-and-white sister, Savage Sword of Conan, two years later.

"It'd lost all connection to the source material," says Cary Nord, who later revived Conan for Dark Horse. "I remember seeing him drawn with ridiculous giant battle axes and he was given that Jim Lee-style cross-hatching treatment."

Conan comics returned to mind-blowing effect in 2003. In the early '70s, artists such as Barry Windsor-Smith had won several Shazam Awards, and with the fresh work he produced in the new Conan issue 0, Cary Nord won a 2004 Eisner Award.

The look and feel of the new books was entirely different, with Cary ➔

## CONAN THE SLAYER

The latest Dark Horse incarnation of Conan promises a feast of muscle and fury



July 2016 saw the release of Conan the Slayer, Dark Horse Comics' seventh regular series. The artwork is being produced by Sergio Davila, and issue 1 will have a cover by Lee Bermejo, and an alternative cover by Mark Schultz.

"I can't say much about it because I haven't finished drawing issue 2 yet," says Sergio. "But I can say that these are the adventures of a younger Conan, before he turns 30. He's wilder, crazier, more powerful and more aggressive. He's also very confident and doesn't overthink situations. He's not scared of anybody or anything."

Dark Horse writers and artists have taken a lead in their story ordering from Dale Rippe's article The Dark Storm Conan Chronology, says editor-in-chief Dave Marshall. "New readers will feel completely at home," Dave says. "But the events take place after Conan the Avenger. Just like the previous Dark Horse series, Slayer will be a mix of adaptations of Howard stories connected together by original stories."



### CRAZY NIGHTS

The set of his brow reminds us of Frazetta's moody Conan, but Sergio Davila is promising a wild and crazy ride in the new comics.



### TAKE TWO

Alternative cover for Conan the Slayer issue 1, drawn by Mark Schultz.



### LUCKY SEVEN

The art board for page 7 of Conan the Slayer issue 1, by Sergio Davila.



### 1952

The very first representation of Conan in a comic book was created in Mexico and entitled La reina de la Costa Negra – an adaptation of Robert E Howard's The Queen of the Black Coast.



### 1970

With art by newcomer Barry Smith, Marvel released issue 1 of Conan the Barbarian, written by Conan fan Roy Thomas. Barry pencilled the comic for two years, followed by John Buscema.



### 1971

Marvel's early-'70s burst of Conan continued with Savage Tales, which frequently featured the Cimmerian. The brutal cover of the first issue was painted by John Buscema.

### 1973

Marvel's first rendition of Red Sonja appeared in issue 23 of Conan the Barbarian. Gil Kane drew the cover, and Barry Smith did the internal artwork. The spin-off character is still going.





### CONQUEROR

As Conan ages, Tomás gives him the look of a jaded campaigner, with grey beard to round it off.



## CROWNING OF KING CONAN

Argentine artist Tomás Giorello, who's been drawing Conan since 2007, talks about his work on King Conan

### How did you get into drawing comics?

After high school, I studied illustration and drawing comics with the Villagrán brothers. They taught me how to draw and how to get into the comic book field.

### How did you end up drawing Conan?

I had finished a five-year run on a Star Wars title at Dark Horse and was asked if I was interested in replacing Cary Nord.

### What media did you use for Conan?

I used 0.5 2B and 0.7 2B pencils.

### You drew Conan, Conan the Cimmerian and King Conan. How have you developed him, and developed as an artist, over the last nine years?

I think I've changed a lot. For some artists drawing the same character gets tedious, but for me it's the opposite. The more you draw something, the better you get at it and the better it gets, and it's very exciting to experience it. As for Conan, I've always seen him as an experienced warrior, so drawing him in his youth wasn't easy for me. It was a great change when we jumped into his older years in King Conan. I got the chance to finally give his face harder features and darker expressions, and put scars on his body.

### What's been your favourite storyline?

"Hour Of The Dragon" and "Wolves Beyond The Border," both in King Conan. Those stories show more of his human side. He feels the weight of his crown, finds love, yearns for her once she's gone. It was a chance to show a wide range of expressions, a more complex Conan. He's not just a big guy with a sword.

### Which is your favourite cover?

The first in the "Wolves Beyond The Border" set, because it shows his spirit. He's a king, he has everything power and gold can buy, but he stands there, sword in hand, his armour battered and covered with blood, eyes wild and filled with dissatisfaction, looking for new horizons.

### Which other Conan artists do you admire most, and why?

John Buscema, Frank Frazetta, Alfredo Alcalá, Nestor Redondo, Alex Niño, Cary Nord and many others. They all made the character bigger and more real in one way or another, from the strength in Frazetta and Buscema's Conan to the dynamism and freshness in Nord's. But I tried not to look at them while drawing mine, so that I could come up with my own version of him.

### NO SATISFACTION

The cover art for the Wolves Beyond the Border mini-series is one of Tomás Giorello's favourites.







#### RENDITION

Cary Nord is the most respected of the Dark Horse Conan artists. Here he's recoloured his cover to the graphic novel *The Blood-Stained Crown*.



#### WANT SOME?

Brian Ching wanted to show Conan's "gigantic mirth," but he's never shy of slaying a foe.

#### BIRTH OF CONAN

Greg Ruth literally showed the world how Conan was born on the battlefield in issue 8 of Conan.



➔ championing enhanced pencilling, plus the digital colouring of Dave Stewart. More than that, they approached the character and his world in a more realistic way. By the '90s, with impossible muscles and weapons, a lack of humour, and constant recourse to violence, Conan had lost his way. To revive him, Dark Horse dug down to find the depth his originator Robert E Howard had given him.

#### BRIGHT EYES

"Conan is an intelligent character, which is easy to overlook. I always tried to have something going on behind his eyes a little deeper than just angst or rage or lust," says Cary. "The first book featured a young Conan who had just left his homeland, so in a lot of ways Dave Stewart, the writer Kurt Busiek, me and Conan were all

growing together. I think Conan learned to be less rash, that thinking his way out of trouble was as effective as using his fists."

Cary Nord's wonderful art on Dark Horse's first Conan series brought a level of detail and texture that was hard to sustain month in and month out. Every so often, an issue drawn by Greg Ruth was dropped into the sequence telling more of Conan's backstory. "Born on The Battlefield" is as rich as



#### ORIGINAL

Above, the original cover to the graphic novel that Cary Nord recoloured (above left).

Cary Nord's work, but feels looser and more gestural. And it's pretty bloody, too.

The book was a step away from the horror comic *Freaks of the Heartland*, which Greg had been drawing. "I knew they wanted a more vividly colourful palette, which was new for me, and they wanted a high fantasy, gritty realism," says Greg. "I had to do the first issue of ➔

**"I tried to have something going on behind his eyes... something a little deeper than angst, rage or lust"**



#### 1974

Marvel's magazine-size *Savage Sword of Conan* arrived with a cover by Boris Vallejo, and five black-and-white internal stories with art by John Buscema, Barry Smith, Gil Kane and others.

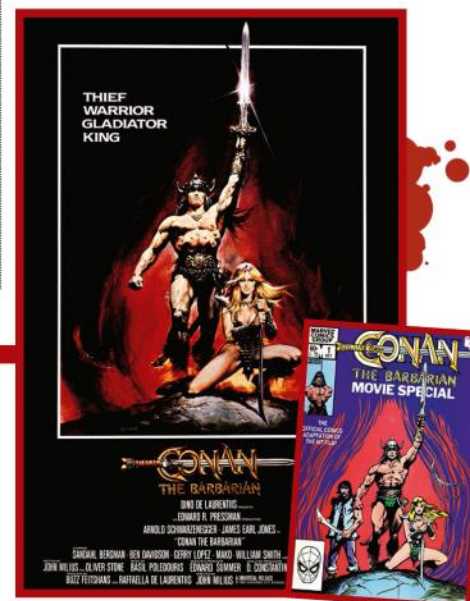


#### 1980

Running alongside *Savage Sword* and *Conan the Barbarian*, Marvel introduced *King Conan*, written by Roy Thomas and drawn by John Buscema. It ran until 1989.

#### 1982

Marvel tied in with the Arnold Schwarzenegger film *Conan the Barbarian* with a two-issue movie special for new fans. The cover of the first issue mimicked the film's poster art.



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### THE AVENGER

It's a lithe-looking Conan that Brian Ching drew in *Conan the Avenger*, with panther-like qualities.

➤ Conan while also doing the final issue of *Freaks*, and a lot of *Freaks* bled into Conan in a way that wasn't working. Conan needed to be crisper, Conan was action.

"When I look back at 'Born on the Battlefield' I see it as a kind of crazy experiment that somehow worked. It's all because of Kurt Busiek's mastery of the story and the character. I learned more about comics and storytelling working on that book than any other time in my life."

The success of the Conan title grew, and Dark Horse has run several different Conan

series, each looking at a different era in Conan's life. They've all been kept close to the original Robert E Howard stories, with some bridging and improvisation here and



there. Tomás Giorello drew Conan the Cimmerian, about Conan's military feats, followed by King Conan, in which he's an older, bearded leader. Brian Ching has recently finished drawing Conan the Avenger after 25 issues. His Conan looks angular and lithe.

### QUICK AND AGILE

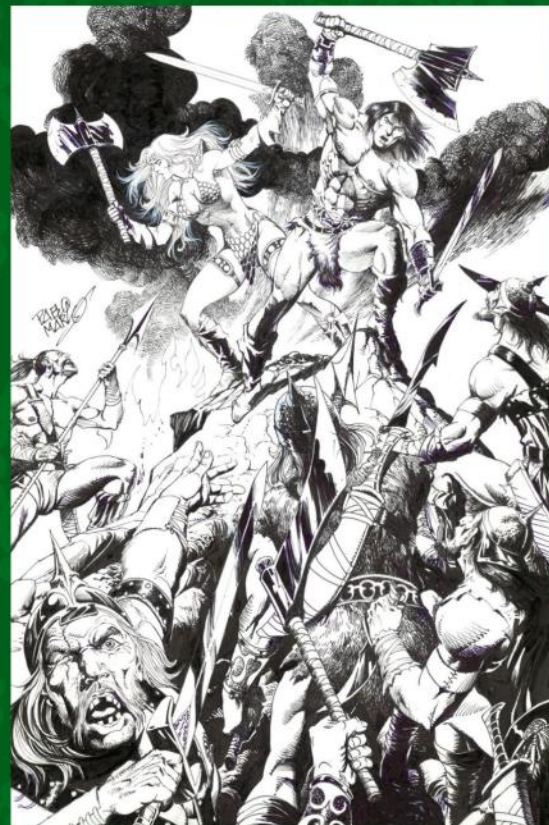
"Howard describes him as being panther-like," says Brian. "He would need to be quick and agile in his world. Yes, he's strong but not the type of massive musculature that looks like he could tear the limbs off his enemies. I drew Conan with a little

## SONJA: THE LADY IN RED

Despite many imitations, Red Sonja is Conan's closest living relative in the world of comics....

From Kull, Ka-Zar, Tarzan and Sláine, to He-Man and Bran Mak Morn, there have been many fictional savages in comics. However, Conan's closest comic book relative must be Red Sonja, also created by Robert E Howard. She has been rendered by an array of artists, easily adapting from Conan to drawing the redhead in bikini armour and vice versa.

"They live in the same period and they could even share adventures," says Sergio Davila. "I've had a great time drawing her. She's a warrior and not a typical girl who needs help or needs to be rescued - she's the one rescuing you."



### DOUBLE THE FUN

When a fan asked Pablo Marcos to illustrate two of his signature characters together, he drew this for the commission.

“Deep inside all of us lives the desire to be just like Conan”



### 1996

After discontinuing Conan the Barbarian and *Savage Sword of Conan*, Marvel experimented. The short-lived Conan had this cover by the Brothers Hildebrandt on issue 6.

### 2003

Eight years after Conan's Marvel run ceased, Dark Horse picked up the official licence from Robert E Howard's estate and Cary Nord pencilled issue 0 of Conan, which won an Eisner.



### 2008

With Tomás Giorello drawing, Dark Horse began Conan the Cimmerian, which would run for 26 issues. Next came Conan the Barbarian, Conan the Avenger and King Conan.

smirk. My take was that he loves who he is. That there's a freedom to being so fearless."

Like many other Conan artists, it's the character's mirth rather than melancholy that Brian identifies with most. "This has been the best experience in my professional life," he says. "My artwork took a huge shift when I began this book - I started inking my own work, tried experimenting with different materials and techniques. It's such a liberating feeling."

Looking back across all the great Conan artwork as we prepare to savour a new chapter of the barbarian's artistic story, it's a little easier to appreciate why the character is so enduring. "Conan is such a special character that his adventures will never finish," says Pablo. "Deep inside us lives the desire to be like him." **END**



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# Sketchbook

## Patxi Peláez

Comic characters are trying to leap from the pages of this Basque Country artist's sketchbook

### Artist PROFILE

**Patxi Peláez**

**LOCATION:** Spain



Patxi lives in the Basque Country, Spain, where he's worked in the animation industry for over 20 years, as an art director, character designer and in visual development for feature films and television. He's also an illustrator of children's books for various publishers in Spain.

[www.facebook.com/patxi.pelaez.7](http://www.facebook.com/patxi.pelaez.7)

### BLADEMASTER

"A cartoon-style drawing. I feel very comfortable in this kind of style. It's closer to what I usually do in my animation work. And I love swords!"



### WARRIOR DWARF

"A warrior dwarf. I'm not a fan of The Lord of the Rings saga, but I love this kind of aesthetic and character."



### HELLBOY

"Before I discovered animation, my first love was comics, so I draw lots of comic characters. It's fun to give a personal view of some of them, such as Hellboy. A great character and a brilliant design."

"Before I discovered animation, my first love was comics, so I draw lots of comic characters"



## ATROPOS

"This is Atropos, a little bastard with bad intentions. He appears in *Insomnia* by Stephen King. I really like his books, which are filled with memorable characters."



## ALIEN

"I like playing with the anatomy of the characters. The creatures and monsters let me do these things. It's good fun."



## BIG GUYS

"A drawing without direction or pretension. It's what happens when you doodle while you're talking on the phone."



## GORGON

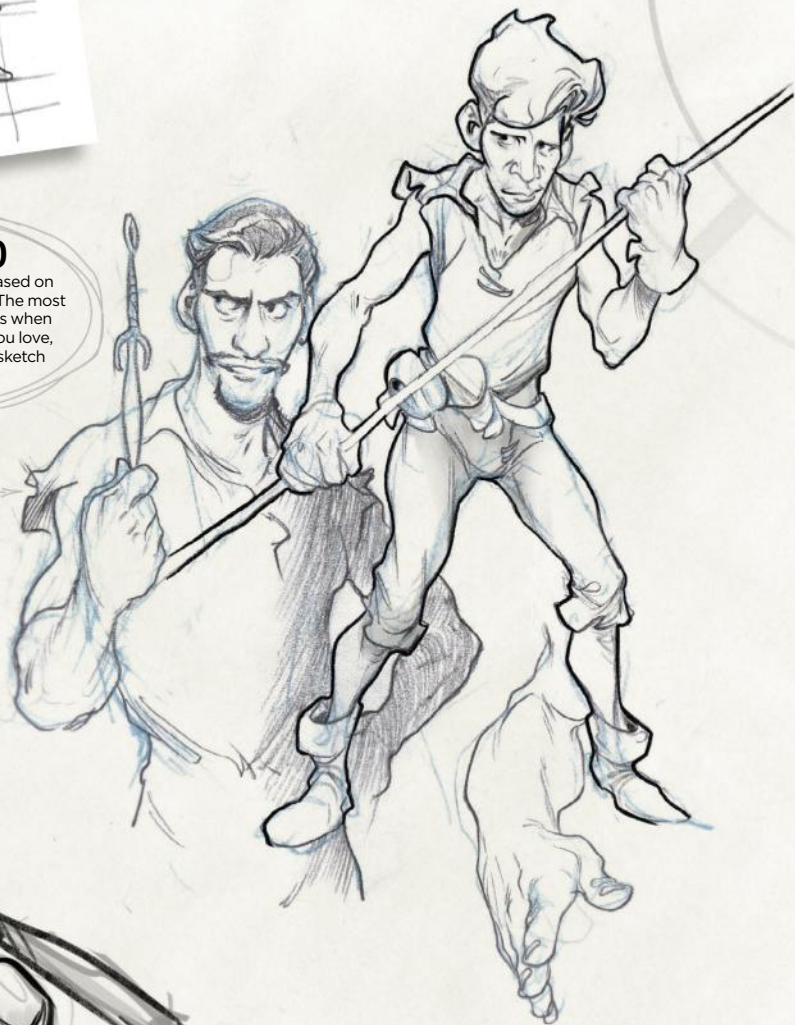
"I love Marvel comics. Here's my version of Gorgon, an Inhuman. Marvel has an incredible gallery of characters to inspire."



# Sketchbook

## ROBIN HOOD

"Research characters based on the story of Robin Hood. The most fun thing about my job is when you are drawing what you love, without pressure. This sketch is one of those."



## THE BATMAN

"Despite my love of comics, I've barely forayed into the industry. Some of my favourite artists come from this medium and I hope to have time in the future to work in comics, whether as penciller or inker. For now it's just a dream, though. Here's Batman and an Accidental Geisha."



## AZAZEL

"A quick sketch of another demon, done digitally. It's great, but I still prefer the traditional pen on paper."



"The most fun thing is when you're drawing what you love, without any pressure"



## JOHN CARTER

"Another personal version, this time of Edgar Rice Burroughs' character John Carter from Mars."

## EARRINGS

"A small pencil sketch of some girls' heads. This was just for fun and to look deeper into my own style."

## VENOM

"I enjoy giving my own personal vision of familiar characters and this is Venom, a well-known character from Marvel Comics."

## HEROES

"Batgirl, a Ninja Turtle and another big guy. When I draw I like the mixture of realistic and cartoon style. It's the drawing style that appeals to me the most."

## OLD CHINESE DRAGON

"Designs for an animated film in Spain. In my work, many versions are usually drawn before finding the final one."



# ARTIST PORTFOLIO

# FIONA STAPLES

The hottest artist in comics today talks to us about *Saga*, her drawing past and her future prospects...

**M**y favourite character is Special Agent Gale because he's a sarcastic jerk. Almost everything he says is pretty mean, and I relish drawing those expressions," says Fiona Staples, probably the hottest artist in comics today.

She's talking about a pale, bat-winged spy character in *Saga*. After over 30 issues of the smash hit indie title, the comic she created with writer Brian K Vaughan has won her 17 trophies: Eisners, Harveys and more.

*Saga* is the tale of star-crossed lovers Alana and Marko, and their baby daughter Hazel. The couple come from different sides in a galactic war and when their treachery is discovered, it seems just about everybody in the universe is out to get them. As the title suggests, it's an epic tale of love and war across the stars.

Fiona doesn't seem as interested in the main characters as some of the quirkier ones. Another of her favourites is the horned grandma, Klara. Stern, cranky and

brutal... Klara's happy to spill blood to protect her family. And Fiona also enjoys drawing bounty hunter The Brand.

"With *The Brand*, I mainly just wanted to draw a woman who's sexy in an atypical way. Brian wrote this very cool, self-assured freelancer and I thought it would be great to have her look suave and masculine-presenting," she says.

## WORKING AS EQUALS

Her working relationship with writer Brian K Vaughan is as good as it can get, and she has as much input as she wants. She regards him as a bigger name in the industry – he does have about 10 years more experience than she does – but she feels she's always treated as an equal. They both co-own the title, which is published by Image Comics.

With its big themes of family, revenge and redemption and its extreme plot twists, *Saga* could so easily have been a dark and gritty affair. But Fiona draws it with a light touch, using bright and lively colours. It's refreshingly unmasculine, and that ➡



## THE BEGINNING OF AN EPIC SAGA

*Saga* issue one introduced the star-crossed lovers Alana and Marko, and their baby Hazel, who narrates parts of the story.



## BLOWING A GALE

Special Agent Gale's cutting verbal style and violence make him one of Fiona's favourites to draw.

## Artist PROFILE

**Fiona Staples**

**LOCATION:** Canada

**FAVOURITE ARTISTS:** James Harren, Sean Murphy, Daniel Warren, Johnson, Amy Reeder, Tommy Lee Edwards

**SOFTWARE USED:** Photoshop and Manga Studio

**WEB:** [www.fionastaples.com](http://www.fionastaples.com)

## KIDNAP

Will this robot, with a television for a head, pay the price of absconding with the toddler Hazel, in issue 25 of *Saga*?





“I don’t know where the Saga story is headed long-term, so I just take it month by month!”





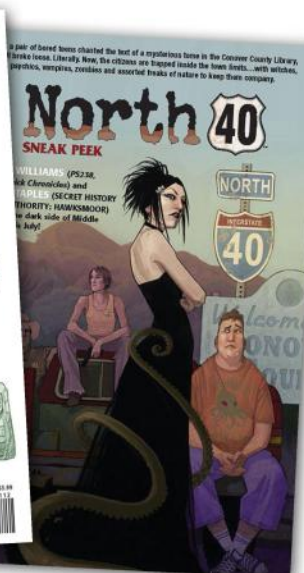
### MYSTERY SOCIETY

Working with Steve Niles and Ashley Wood on *Mystery Society* was a dream come true for Fiona.



### GOING INDIE BUT REAPING THE BENEFITS

While DC owned 100 per cent of *North 40*, moving to *Mystery Society* Fiona was able to retain a 25 per cent royalty on the artwork – vital for the up-and-coming artist.



➡ might just be why every issue is so eye-catching, with her watercolour-esque digital art on the cover.

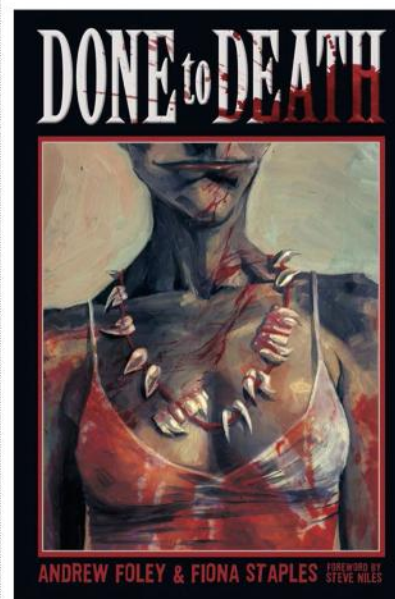
Saga's success has spelled bigger things – if it's possible to get bigger than Saga itself. Fiona also drew the revival of *Archie*, with its all-American retro hero Archie Andrews and his friends Betty and Veronica. Dating back to 1939, the title has huge resonance in the US and its publisher revived it with Mark Waid writing.

For Fiona, the process is a little different to Saga. She explains: "I do full-colour work for Saga, and *Archie* is coloured by Andre Szymanowicz. This was meant to save me time, but it still takes me longer to draw *Archie* because everything has to look somewhat realistic. A car has to look like a real car and a school has to look like a school. In *Saga* I'd just draw some stupid dome thing or flying fruit."

*Archie* was the seventh best-selling comic when the new issue 1 came out in July

### GIVING A TOOTHY GRIN

Fiona Staples refers to her first comic, *Done To Death*, with its dark humour, as *Mile One* in her career.



“I’m hoping creator-owned books become a viable option”

2015, beating the likes of *The Amazing Spider-Man*, *Justice League*, *Walking Dead* and Marvel's *Princess Leia*. Yet the huge popularity that Fiona experienced hasn't ended up going to her head. Growing up in Calgary and attending the Alberta School of Art and Design, the Eisner award is something she dreamed of winning. Now that she has one, she points to other artists who she thinks have more skill. She loves James Harren, Sean Murphy and Daniel Warren Johnson, for instance.

"I know that it's kind of 'my moment' right now, and the temptation is to strike while the iron is hot and put my name on as many projects as possible," she says. "But it was *Saga* that got me here, and I'm not going to jeopardise that series by taking other jobs, *Archie* being the exception. So that's what it's like: exercising will power and saying no to a lot more things!"

### TEN YEARS IN THE MAKING

The huge respect she's receiving at the moment hasn't come out of the blue, and she's been working hard for a decade. Her first comic was *Done To Death*, which appeared in 2006 and featured a nerdy vampire and a homicidal book editor. She took it on when she was still studying, drawing on acetate with a crow quill.

Another of her highlights is *North 40*, written by Aaron Williams, which featured monsters in small town America. By then she was 100 per cent digital, emulating watercolour and using textures for a mixed media feel. It's got some of the hallmarks



# HOW SAGA COMES TO LIFE

The epic space drama of love and war has become a hit, thanks to Fiona's exceptional art

Working alongside writer Brian K Vaughan, Fiona Staples is the artist behind *Saga*, one of the most eclectic and unusual comics you're ever likely to read. It's creator-owned, and perhaps that's the reason it ever saw the light of day.

"I never felt like a hired gun. All *Saga* decisions are made by both of us, from scheduling to foreign edition deals to T-shirt designs," says Fiona.

"I don't know exactly where the story is headed long-term, so I just take it month by month! Hazel is growing up fast, and the rest of the family is ageing a bit as well, less obviously. I try to have their appearance reflect their circumstances. The last story arc saw the family separated, and Marko and Alana looking pretty haggard. When we come back to them they're going to be more in adventure mode."

Like her other comics, *Saga* is drawn digitally using Photoshop and Manga Studio. "I love being able to work in colour, instead of having to scan in inks and colour afterwards. Digital is freeing to me, because I can get the image in my mind onto the screen with very little interference. For instance, I can pick a colour with a click instead of washing my paintbrush and mixing the colour on a palette every time. I can paint white-on-black as easily as black-on-white. There are no physical barriers to worry about," she says.



## GOING UP IN THE WORLD OF SAGA

The Brand (wearing the tie) and her young ward Sophie (glasses) embark on a climb in issue 29 of *Saga*.



## ARCHIE

This title couldn't be more different to *Saga* in so many ways, and won praise from critics and readers alike.

## ROCK STAR

An uncoloured centre-spread from the first issue of *Archie*.

later seen in *Saga*, and came out through the DC imprint Wildstorm.

In 2010, *Mystery Society* came along and in it Fiona worked similarly to how she does now. "This book is significant because it's when I moved back to doing creator-owned work. I'd spent a few years doing work-for-hire for various companies and didn't mind, but I wanted at least a percentage of what I came up with," she says.

And perhaps that's one of the most inspiring things about Fiona's approach to comics. Not only has she been leading the way with unusual and thought-provoking

artwork, she takes risks and wants to take ownership of what she creates – not sell it off to one of the big boys in the market.

"I know books like *Saga* are the exception, and most indie books can't be sustained for long, much less counted on to be profitable. But I'm hoping this will change and creator-owned books become a viable option for more creators.

"The more the market grows, the more indie titles publishers like Image, Dynamite and Boom will be able to sustain, so I think it's crucial to make accessible comics for a wide range of tastes," she concludes. **END**



# Sketchbook

## Tara Fernon

The appeal of wildlife – both friendly and aggressive – comes across clearly in this artist's sketchbook

### Artist PROFILE

**Tara Fernon**

COUNTRY: US



Tara works on a sustainable-living farm in Redmond, Washington, US, and her first big break was when she was chosen by Jon Schindehette to be his concept art/illustration intern at Wizards of the Coast for a summer.

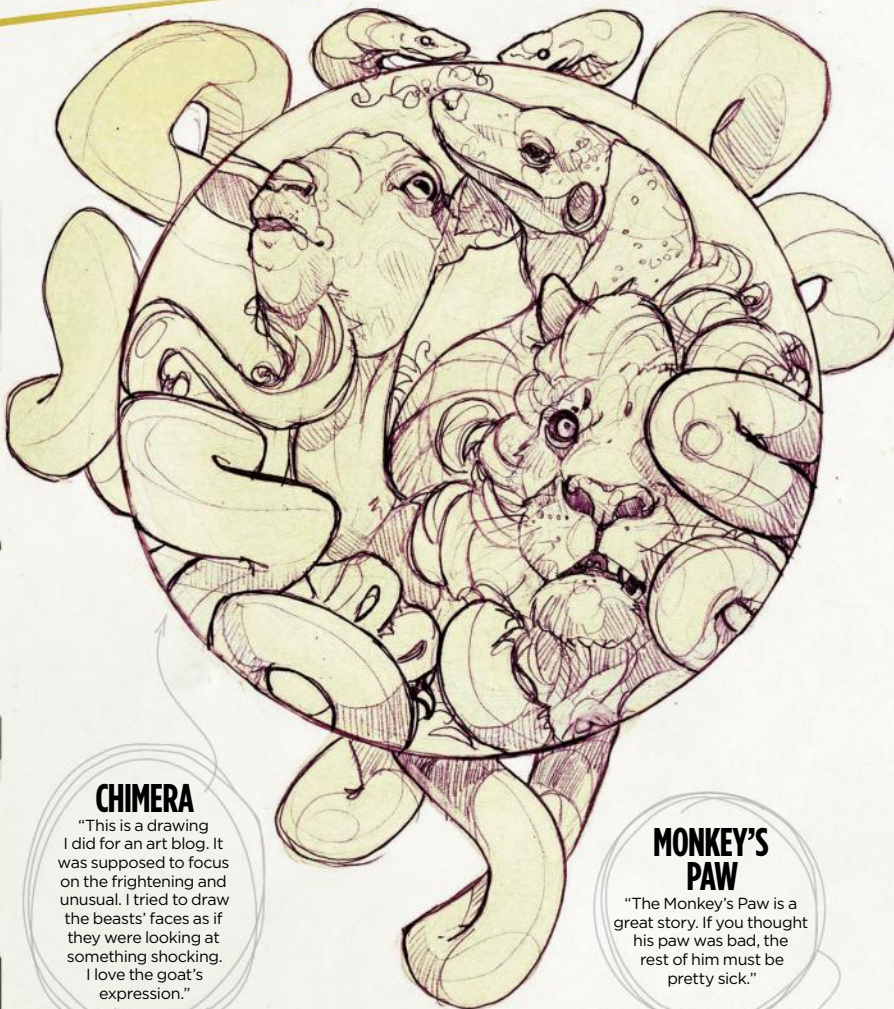
[www.tarafernon.carbonmade.com](http://www.tarafernon.carbonmade.com)

### SEVEN SNAKES

"A seven-headed serpent is the symbol of Cambodia. You see it everywhere there, alongside religious symbols. I drew this when I returned home from holiday there."



"I tried to draw the beasts' faces as if they were looking at something shocking. I love the goat's expression"



### CHIMERA

"This is a drawing I did for an art blog. It was supposed to focus on the frightening and unusual. I tried to draw the beasts' faces as if they were looking at something shocking. I love the goat's expression."

### MONKEY'S PAW

"The Monkey's Paw is a great story. If you thought his paw was bad, the rest of him must be pretty sick."





**SICK**

"This will always bring me back to Vietnam because the circles in this sketchbook drawing were from me tracing around the cups in my hostel. This is another one for the odd art blog."





# Sketchbook

## WAR DOG

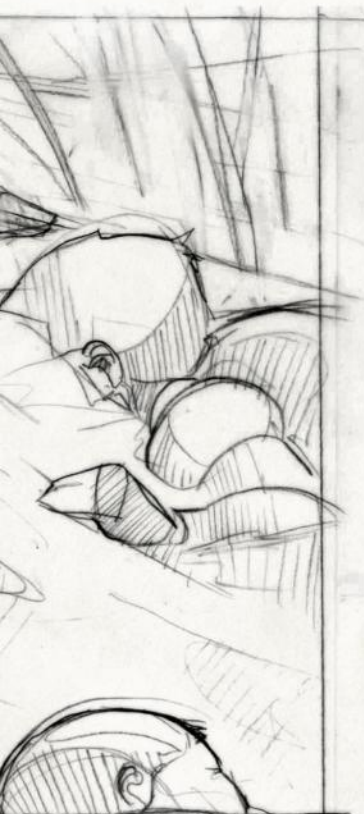
"While I was drawing this, I imagined the feeling of being laid out in the snow and just how cold it must feel. That's what high school in Colorado felt like during winter!"

## TIGER HEARTS

"Tigers seem to come up in my drawings a lot. I just feel like sometimes, you need to draw a demonic tiger over a platter of sacrificial hearts. Yeah, that looks good."







"Sometimes you need to draw a demonic tiger over a platter of sacrificial hearts"

### ODYSSEY CIRCE

"I started doing an artist's study of John Waterhouse's Vanity. I tried to transform it into something else. I love depicting stories, so I turned it into Circe from the Odyssey because I'm inspired by mythology. I love this drawing so much that I decided to do more of Odysseus' travels and am now working on a series of them."

### ODYSSEY SIREN

"This is my favourite drawing right now. This is the second piece in my personal project for illustrating parts of the Odyssey. Can you see Odysseus' ship in the waves?"







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# WORKSHOPS

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Andy Brase uses line and ink to depict a deadly version of Ezio, the iconic killer from Assassin's Creed II

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Favourite 2000 AD artist Dylan Teague explains his process for creating a comic page in Clip Studio Paint

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Nimit Malavia combines traditional and digital media to produce a fresh take on Tintin

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Ken Lashley's stunning line art is brought to life by colourist Juan Fernandez, who shares his techniques

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Chris Visions shows how to compose an image, then colour with both traditional inks and Photoshop

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Arthur Mask shows how he creates characters with varied body types tied together with coherent style and colour

## 142 Give Harley Quinn a realistic look

Discover how Admira Wijaya uses Photoshop to produce a realistic portrait of the Joker's unhinged admirer



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## GET YOUR RESOURCES

How-to video tutorials, custom brushes and more! See page 146



## PHOTOSHOP &amp; PAINTER

# PLANNING A SUPERHERO COVER

**JULIAN TOTINO TEDESCO** walks us through the process of creating an image that's both appealing as an illustration and functional as a cover.

## Artist PROFILE

**Julian Totino Tedesco**

LOCATION: Argentina



Julian is a freelance illustrator working mainly doing

comic book covers for clients such as Marvel, Dark Horse and DC.  
<http://ifxm.ag/j-j-tedesco>

All images © Marvel

**C**reating a cover, whether it's for a book, a magazine or a comic book, involves much more than just picking a nice image. A cover serves a purpose, and therefore there's a lot of things you need to have in mind before starting to draw. In this case, I'll show you how I design and create an effective comic-book cover – a superhero comic-book cover, to be more specific.

There are a few things you have to keep in mind when it comes to superheroes,

and the first is that they're usually all about dynamism and power. You'll find a few exceptions out there, of course, but most times, that's what an editor seeks on covers of this genre (and I assume that's what the audience wants, as well).

Another thing you should have in mind is that there are hundreds of issues being released every week, and they're all displayed next to each other, whether on the shelves or in a catalogue, so your image should have a clear and readable composition. It must be eye-catching,

even from a distance or in a small thumbnail, so it can stand out and grab the potential buyers' interest.

All of these things can be achieved through thoughtful use of composition, tone and colour. I'll show you how I use these elements in my work.

I'm not saying this is the only way to do a superhero cover – and I encourage you to play and experiment with other ways – but this is a formula that has proven to be successful for years, and that we'll explore in this workshop.

## 1 Searching for references

The first thing I do when I get my assignment – in this case, a powerful image of a female Thor – is to search for references of the subject. Google is the obvious tool for this. These images help me understand what she looks like, what's her attitude, her weapons, her powers, etc. This way I can do an accurate portrait of her that can reflect her world and personality.



## 2 Doodling ideas

Once I'm familiarised with the subject I begin noting ideas in my sketchbook. Every cover I've ever done has started here. I draw everything I think could work. This is the time to let the ideas flow, the more the better. This way I can see which would work better – or won't work at all. Doodling has this retroactive effect, in which the more I draw, the more ideas and concepts come to my mind. ➡➡



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RESOURCES  
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### 3 Polishing your doodles

I choose two or three doodles, those I consider the best, and scan them. Then I create a file in Photoshop the size of the published art and start cleaning and painting the sketches. This is the most important part of a cover, I'd say. It's like the foundation of a house: if it doesn't work, everything falls apart. Another important thing is to ask your editor what space the title and credits on the cover will take. You'll see in a moment why this is important!

#### SHORTCUTS

##### Copy all layers

Cmd+Shift+C (Mac)

Ctrl+Shift+C (PC)

Make a selection, then use this shortcut to copy all visible layers without having to merge them.

#### PRO SECRETS

##### ENHANCING THE TEXTURE

When finishing an illustration, I often apply the Smart Sharpen filter (Filter > Sharpen > Smart Sharpen). I set the values according to the needs of the image. It's an effective way to make the image look more focused and enhance the brush strokes and textures.



### 4 Working with the feedback

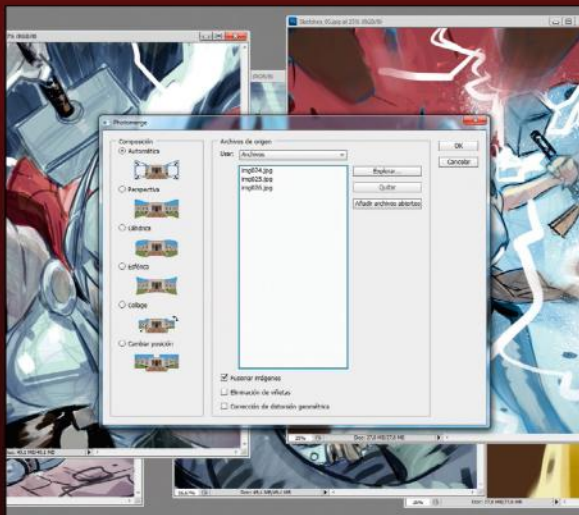
After I send in the sketches, my editor points out that we won't have enough space for the many blocks of text required on the cover. Didn't I tell you? If I'd asked that beforehand, I would have worked the composition in a different way. Now that I know exactly what space is available, I can do a couple of sketches that would fit much better.





## 5 Drawing the cover

Once the editor selects a sketch, I start with the drawing. Usually, as in this case, I work with pencils on an 11x17-inch sheet of Strathmore Bristol Vellum Surface paper. I start drawing with a black Prismacolor Col-Erase and once I'm happy with the proportions and the overall look, I finish it with a mechanical pencil. I use a 0.5 and 0.3.



## 7 Scanning the pencil art

I scan the pencil art at 600dpi in three parts (you don't actually need it that big, I just like to keep my originals at a huge resolution) and let Photoshop work its magic using File > Automate > Photomerge. Select the three scanned files, choose the Auto option for Layout, then let Photoshop do all the work.



## 6 Making your own rules

When you create an image, you make the rules. This means that you can (and should) choose to play with the elements of the cover in the way you want or need to. In this case, the cape, rocks, arms, legs, background, everything points to the main character's face, the focal point of the image. You can even add elements to the image just for this purpose.



## 8 Editing the pencil art

Once I have the files all merged and the image completed, I adjust the contrast using Image > Adjustments > Levels. Then, I clean my pencils, but just a little bit – I like some roughness and texture in my work. Here, I will just remove some of the information in the background with the eraser, but I'm leaving lots of spaces with "dirt". Anything that brings an "organic" element to my work, I use it. ➡

### SHORTCUTS

#### Rotate View

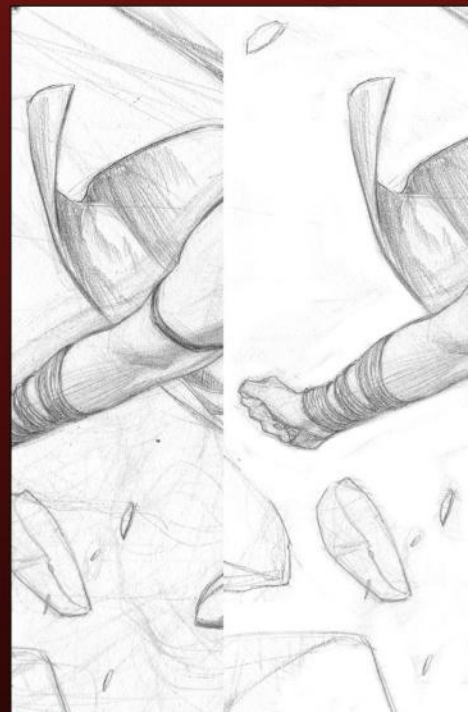
R (Mac & PC)

Easily access the Rotate tool and rotate the canvas to help you paint those curves comfortably. I use it constantly.

### PRO SECRETS

#### BLENDING EDGES

The Blender tool in Painter is a great tool to mix and blend the tones on your painting, making it look more organic and real. You'll need to flatten all of your layers to make it work properly, though. It's a very interesting tool to experiment over your finished images, especially if you're after an oil-like effect.





**PRO SECRETS****HELPING YOUR COMPUTER**

Some brushes are very heavy and can slow down your computer, affecting the flow of your brush stroke. If you're not working on detailed line work but instead painting with textured brush strokes, you can decrease your file's DPI a bit while working (but don't go below 200dpi), then change it back once you're finished and apply the Smart Sharpen filter. You have to be careful to not push it too much, but it really helps.

**WORKSHOP BRUSHES****PHOTOSHOP CUSTOM BRUSHES:****ERASER SOFT TEXTURE**

I use this constantly to erase parts of my brush strokes or to fade general areas. The texture adds a nice organic touch.

**GENERAL SPLATTER**

Great to get a general texture – a rough surface, an explosion, etc. Here I've used it for the rocks and the lightning.

**THICK & THIN**

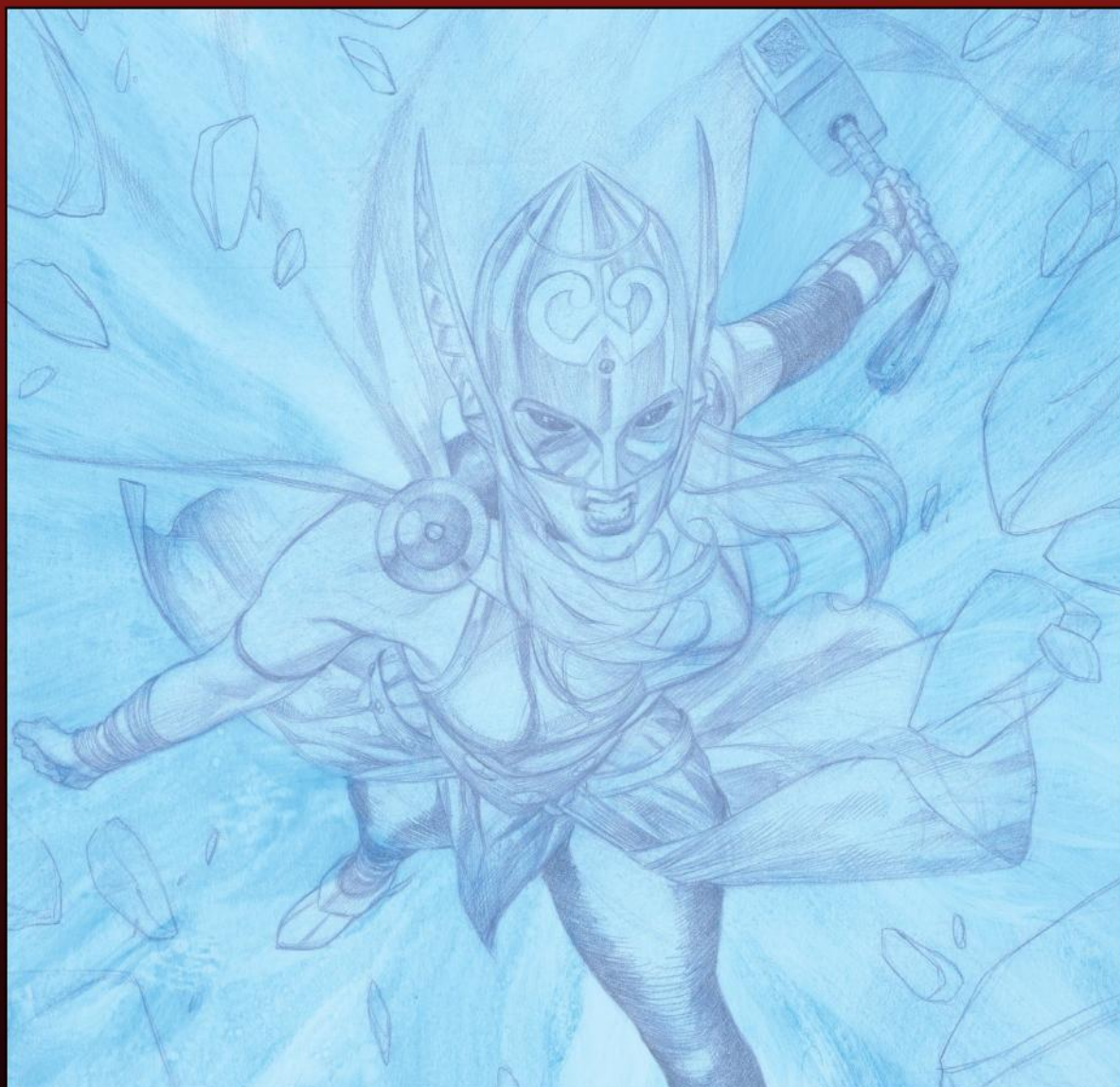
Like a watercolour brush, but can be used either opaque or semi-transparent, which makes it very versatile. Great organic feel.

**9 Creating the document**

I work on a 400dpi RGB file, usually slightly bigger than the printed size. Although I work in RGB, I'm always using the Proof Colors option (in the View menu). This way I can work with the advantages of RGB mode but be aware of what the result will be in CMYK, which is the mode in which I'll send the final art to the publisher.

**10 The initial kick**

I set the pencil layer to Multiply blending mode, so I can paint on layers both above and beneath the pencil art. I set the layer opacity to around 40 per cent, so once I start adding colours, the pencil lines will "blend" with the colours and will look integrated. Using Hue/Saturation (Ctrl+U) I colorise the pencil art according to the colour scheme I have in mind. Then I add a texture at the bottom of the layer stack that purposely points to the focal point of the image. I did this texture in acrylics and scanned it.







## 11 Starting to paint

I start blocking the darker shadows using a brush made by Kyle T. Webster called "Thick & Thin". This brush is not completely opaque, and I also set the layers' opacity to around 70 per cent so the colours blend with the blue of the background, creating a harmonious colour scheme.



## 12 Building volume

I continue painting, adding more layers of semi-transparent colours, creating volume and drawing with the colours. I create layers constantly, but I merge them as I go – I try to have as few layers as possible. Along with the brush, I use a soft textured eraser to correct and fade my strokes when needed. I keep trying to push the viewer's eye to the focal point, adding motion lines in the background and keeping the warmer tones closer to her face.



## 13 The lightning

At this point I start painting on new layers over the pencil, in a more opaque way. When adding the lightning (which I'll leave on a separate layer) I realise that in order to make it brighter I need to make the background and general tones a bit darker. For this I use a few adjustment layers such as Levels and Brightness/Contrast.



## 14 Finishing touches

For the effects on the rocks and the lightning I use a brush that I made out of the texture of a splatter. Once everything is done, I open the file in Painter and blend some parts of the image with a tool called Blender. Notice how the image loses contrast as it moves away from the focal point. Like the composition lines and the colours, contrast is another efficient way to keep the viewer's eyes where we want. **END**



## SKETCHBOOK PRO &amp; PHOTOSHOP

## HOW TO PAINT A GIRL AND HER TANK

Cartoonist **BRETT PARSON** presents his take on the iconic Tank Girl, using the drawing tools of SketchBook Pro and colouring in Photoshop

## Artist PROFILE

**Brett Parson**  
LOCATION: US



Brett is a freelance illustrator and comic book artist from

America's East Coast. Recently he's worked on a comic series for DC/Vertigo called New Romancer, and on the 21st Century Tank Girl title for Titan Comics. <http://ifxm.ag/bparson>

**S**o I must have been 11 or 12 years old when I discovered Tank Girl. A comic book museum that I would go to, often several times a month, was having an exhibit of all the artwork from the original series. This was my first introduction to Tank Girl, to the art of Jamie Hewlett (now famous for creating the cartoon band Gorillaz), and to the bizarre slapstick writing of Alan Martin... It would change my young brain forever.

It was the first time I realised that comics can be fun. Twenty years later and I've had the honour of working with Alan Martin on a few Tank Girl stories, which are hopefully helping a whole new generation of warped young minds to discover her.

Now if you're thinking, "Who the #\$@! is Tank Girl?", do yourself a favour and buy as many books as you can. But if you're already a fan, then you'll understand how excited I was when

ImagineFX contacted me about having her on the cover. This workshop reveals my process of creating an image of Tank Girl from the rough sketch and final line work in SketchBook Pro, to the finished colours in Photoshop. It'll help to have an understanding of basic drawing methods, and how to treat light and shadow. But all of these techniques can be applied to a wide range of skill sets and styles. So strap on your boots, slap a Band Aid on your head, and let's have some fun!

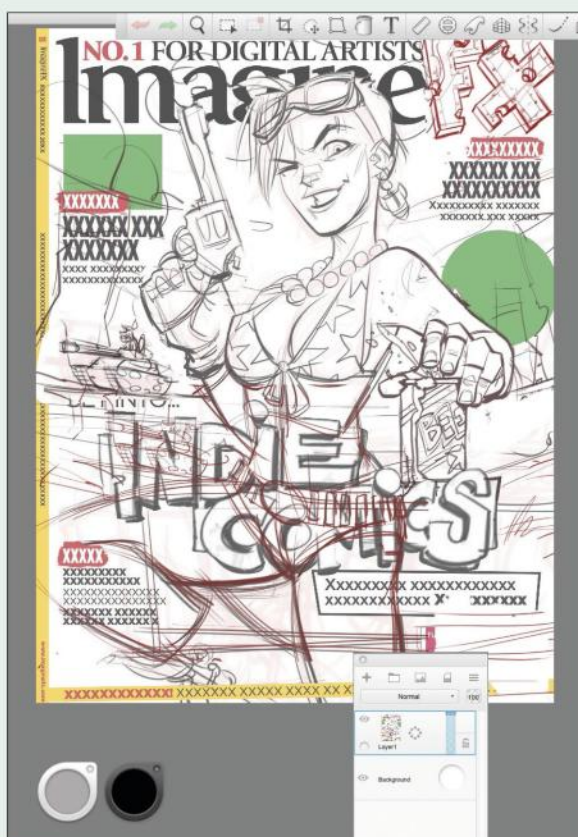
  
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RESOURCES  
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VIDEO  
AVAILABLE

## PRO SECRETS

## KEEP WORKING AT YOUR VISION

Don't always settle for your first choice. Often after I've finished colouring, I'll create duplicates of certain layers and play with the colours. This gives me a chance to visualise other ideas that I might not have thought of while getting my initial colour scheme down.

**1** ROUGH SKETCH

I find SketchBook Pro to have a much more natural feeling for drawing than Photoshop. And its rulers and circle tools can't be beat. So using SketchBook, I create a sketch of how I want the cover to look. It gives me an idea of how everything will fit together, taking into consideration where different cover elements, such as text and titles, will go.

**2** CLEAN UP THE SKETCH

Sometimes it seems like overkill, but I often do a trace of the roughs to clean things up before I move on to finished lines. I lower the Opacity of the existing layer, and create a new layer on top of that. Using a light colour and a soft Pencil brush I quickly trace over the image, adding a few elements and removing some that I no longer want. ➡







## PRO SECRETS

### SPEND TIME ON YOUR LINES

The lines are the backbone of your art. Let them shine! Play around using fat, skinny or tapered lines. A good variety of weights and styles is sure to keep the viewer interested. It can also help to make certain parts of the artwork stand out, and others fall back.



## 3 FINISHING THE LINE WORK

Now it's time to clean up the drawing and tighten up the lines. Again, I lower the Opacity of my current layer and create a new layer. I use a modified Pencil tool and a darker colour to trace over the sketch below, adding variation in line weight to give the drawing more personality.



## 4 LAYERING THE DRAWING

As I'm drawing my finished line work, I break the drawing up using separate layers. This makes it much easier to edit colours and add depth in the colouring stage. In this drawing I create a layer for the foreground, and one for the background. If there were other characters or elements I would usually place them on their own layer as well.

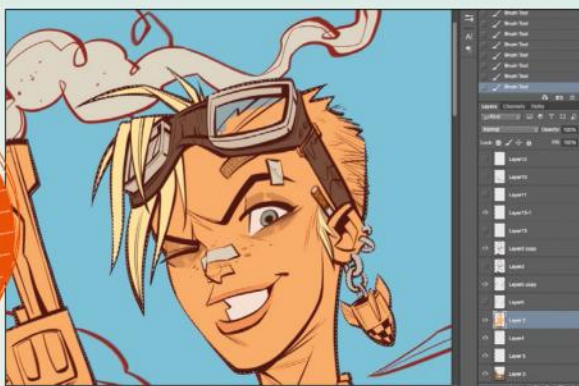
## SHORTCUTS

### Hue/Saturation

Cmd+U (Mac)

Ctrl+U (PC)

Use this to pull up the Hue/Saturation window to modify colours on the fly.



## 5 BLOCKING FLAT COLOURS

Now that I've finished my line art, I start the colouring process in Photoshop. I create a new layer under each layer of line drawings, and fill in that element with a solid colour. Then holding down either Cmd (Mac) or Ctrl (PC) I click the colour layer to select it, and fill in all the different colours.



## 6 ADDING COLOUR HOLDS

Changing the colour of the lines can take things up a notch. To do this I hold Cmd (Mac) or Ctrl (PC) and click a layer of line art (this will select only the lines). I then colour over the lines, usually only on Tank Girl's skin and lighter objects in the scene. I try to not go too crazy; it's very easy to go overboard during this stage – the voice of experience!

## WORKSHOP BRUSHES

### SKETCHBOOK PRO CUSTOM BRUSHES:

#### SUPER YETI

A fuzzy brush with a nice variety of sizes with Pen Pressure. Used for rough sketching and layouts.

#### 5-B BEER-CAN

I use this brush for the final line work.



## 7 TIME FOR SOME CEL SHADING

Now I add animation-style cel shading. I create a new layer, set it to Multiply and place it between the colour and line art. Then I add shadows, using a light grey brush at 100 per cent Opacity. By setting the layer to Multiply it enables the colours underneath to show through, but become darker.



## 8 AIRBRUSH SHADING

Using the Magic Wand selection tool on the layer of colours enables me to select certain areas to work on at a time. Next, I create a new layer that's set to Multiply above the colour layer. I select an Airbrush tool on a very low Opacity (which is also set to Multiply), and add gradient shading and pink skin hues where I want them.





## 9 ADDING HIGHLIGHTS

I create a Screen layer above my layers of shading. Then I select the colour layer, hold down Cmd+Alt (Mac) or Ctrl+Alt (PC) and click the Cel Shading layer, which has the effect of deselecting the shadows. With an Airbrush tool on a low Opacity level and using the colour of each area that I'm working on, I can now add highlights where necessary.



## 10 BACKGROUND ELEMENTS

Now I fill in the different colours of the background, making sure to pick colours that don't blend with or drown out the main character. Using a different palette helps if there are elements in the background that I want to stand out. For example, I want the tank to be visible, and so using cool colours helps it pop against the warm sand.

### PRO SECRETS

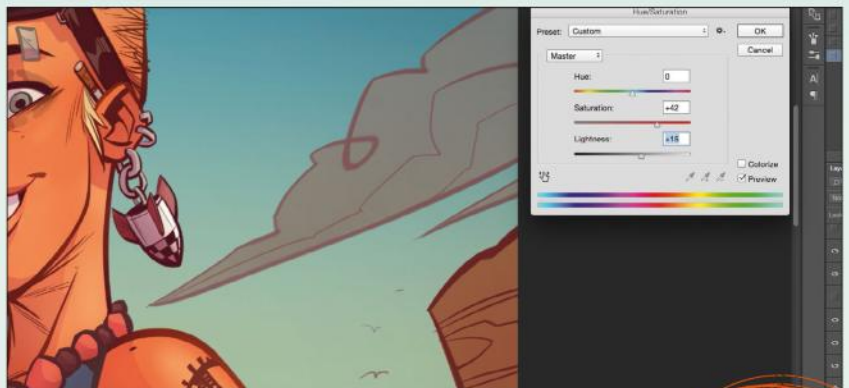
#### GIVE YOUR EYES A BREAK

Often when I'm working on a single piece for multiple hours in a row, it's easy to become blind to problems with the drawing. Before moving on from one step to the next, I'll take a walk or have a bite to eat. Coming back with a fresh pair of eyes makes all the difference.



## 11 BACKGROUND SHADING

I create a new Multiply layer above the background colour layer. I select an Airbrush tool on a low Opacity that's also set to Multiply, and add shading to both help add depth and make the character pop from the background more. I mask off areas using the Lasso so that they're ready for airbrushing, which helps to add even more depth.



## 12 BACKGROUND COLOUR HOLDS

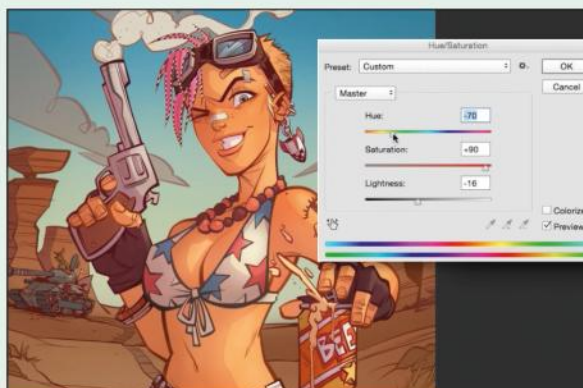
On the background line art layer, I'll often use either the technique from step 6, or I'll use the Hue/Saturation tool to change the colour and darkness of the lines. This is one instance where having the line art on separate layers comes in handy. I find that making the background lines lighter than those of the character introduces added depth.

### SHORTCUTS

#### Eyedropper

Alt (PC & Mac)

I'm constantly using the Eyedropper tool to grab colours from different parts of the drawing.



## 13 USING COLOUR CORRECTION

I'll play with the overall palette throughout the colouring process. By using Hue/Saturation, Color Balance and Brightness/Contrast I'm able to change tones of different colours and different shadows. The ability to play with colours at any stage of the piece is one of the biggest benefits of working digitally.



## 14 ADDING PULP TEXTURE

As a finishing touch, I add a subtle paper texture to the artwork to help knock back the digital vibes. I scan in a suitably old piece of paper, then copy and paste it on to a new layer set to Multiply. Then I adjust the Brightness/Contrast and layer Opacity to achieve the desired level of texture. And there you have it: a girl and her tank! **END**

### PRO SECRETS

#### HAVE FUN!

I know it sounds corny but having fun while you work is the most important thing. Otherwise the work suffers and you're left with a lifeless, uninteresting drawing - no matter how well it's drawn. I find that being in a good mood and having fun is key to putting living, breathing life into your artwork.



## ARTIST INSIGHT

# STORYTELLING TIPS FOR COMIC BOOKS

**Lewis LaRosa** talks about how to interpret scripts and lay out pages to emphasise the action and enhance the narrative...

## Artist PROFILE

**Lewis LaRosa**  
LOCATION: US



Lewis is a comic book artist whose work includes launching and designing The Punisher MAX. Currently exclusive to Valiant Comics, he made a splash illustrating Bloodshot: Reborn.  
<http://ifxm.ag/l-larosa>

**T**he comic book artist's job is to visualise the writer's script in the clearest way possible. If comics were films, the artist would direct, shoot, act, design the costumes, make the props and do the VFX. The amount of control you have over the book is really exciting.

Comics aren't TV shows or films, and have their own storytelling tools. It's amazing how much the shape, size and

order of the panels affect the narrative.

Layout alone plays a crucial part in moving the reader's eye, the pacing and rhythm of the action, the importance of certain story beats, and whether or not a scene is peaceful, full of dramatic tension, or dominated by crazy action.

There's no one right way to interpret a script and visually tell a story other than to make it easily readable, as engaging as possible, and true to the writer's intent.

Collaborating with your writer and editor – and even your inker and colourist – can really be beneficial by not only making sure everyone's on the same page, but for bouncing ideas around.

Using Bloodshot issue 25 as an example, I'm going to guide you through the different layout and camera angle techniques a comic artist uses to pace the storyline, highlighting the action and the emotion along the way.



### 1 PACING TECHNIQUES

The first three panels on page 11 of Bloodshot 25 are all the same size, shape, on the same row, and are relatively small compared to the big fourth panel where the Stalker Dog soldiers burst into the room and attack the main characters. Those first three panels were all about building up to the fourth explosive panel. Tension and release.



### 2 RELATIVE PANEL SIZE

Maximise the size of the most important panel on the page to increase its impact. The second panel on page 12 of the issue, where Stalker Dog soldiers fire away at Bloodshot, was easy to identify in the script as the most exciting panel on that page, so it was drawn to dominate the page. The first panel and last panel are reduced to quick before and after cuts.

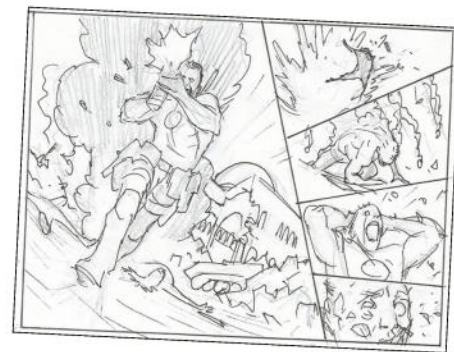




### 3 MONEY SHOTS

Let's jump back to pages 2 and 3 of *Bloodshot* 25, written by the legendary Peter Milligan. They were written as a double-page title spread meant to introduce our hero in action. I'm paraphrasing, but the script for the large, main panel reads, "Bloodshot in the middle of a firestorm in Aleppo, Syria. Bombs explode around him. A number of dead fighters and ruined hardware at his feet." I went with a full body shot,

making sure his trademark red chest circle was clearly visible, with his military armament and ability to take punishment (he's getting shot in the shoulder). I chose a low angle (horizon line around his knees) to make him imposing and larger than life. He's charging and firing as if he's about to trample the reader and leap off the page. Tilting the camera makes it dynamic and enhances the frenetic feel of the scene.



“It’s amazing how much the shape, size and order of the panels affect the narrative...”

### 4 PANEL SHAPES

I love using odd panel shapes, but only to give the storytelling impact. As a rule, I only use them to heighten excitement, particularly in action scenes. Care should be taken so that the storytelling remains clear, arranging the panels so they flow into each other instead of confusing the reader. Compare these two pages: one is a talking heads page with traditional, straightforward panel shapes and arrangement, reinforcing that this is a relatively quiet, mundane scene. The other is an action page full of odd-shaped panels that convey a sense of chaos while still clearly directing the reader's eye across the page. Be sure the shape of the panel complements the composition within. ➔



**5 QUICK CUTS**

Panel four on this page is what I refer to as a 'quick cut': a small, quick, transitional panel that I often draw overlapping the two panels it connects. Its small size and vertical orientation imply that the action within takes place in an instant – the eye's not meant to linger here.

“ Breaking borders should only be done to enhance impact and aid the storytelling ”

**6 THE POWER OF SYMMETRY**

On both these pages, I've used symmetry in the panel arrangement and in the composition of the first two panels to help get across an orderly, sterile feel to the sci-fi lab setting. The mood is calm and quiet, and the heavy use of blacks gives a sense of foreboding.





## TOOLS

Lewis recommends the right art supplies for the job...



For sketching and breakdowns I use a leadholder with an HB lead. Hold the pencil as far away from the tip as possible for faster, looser lines, choking up on it only for the fine details.



A leadholder sharpener. Gotta have one.



Kneaded erasers can change shape, don't tear up the paper, don't leave behind eraser bits, and they can be used to either completely erase or just lighten up pencil work.



Microns are wonderful for the way they respond to the paper. I usually use an O3 and an O05 for all my rendering and a 1 to fill in larger black areas. Some whiteout is handy - I prefer whiteout pens. Pentouch is fairly transparent while DecoColor is pretty opaque. I like having both options for corrections, highlights, effects and so on.



## 7 BREAKING BORDERS

Like anything else, breaking borders should only be done to enhance impact and aid the flow of panel to panel storytelling. This page shows a dream-like sequence written by Peter Milligan where the character sees his wife floating above him moments before he dies. There are some rules I follow when breaking borders. First, border breaks should follow the rules of foreground/background/middleground. Used correctly, this can create a sort of 3D movie effect. I wanted the wife in panel three to break borders, but



since she's in the middleground I had to have the head in the foreground at the bottom pop out of the panel. Second, objects breaking borders should spill over into consecutive panels only. Here, the guy's helmet in panel one leads the eye to panel two, the wife's hair takes us from panel two down her legs pointing at the soldier at the bottom of panel three, and her left elbow leads to panel four. If you break the border, break a whole lot of it! If it's half-assed, the effect will be weak and it'll look like you simply ran out of room. Be bold!



## 8 GO WITH THE Z-FLOW

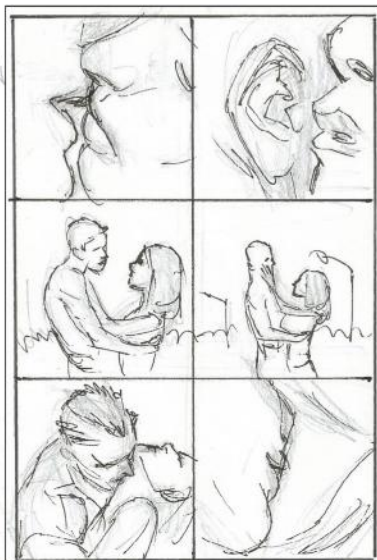
Direct the reader's eye in a Z-pattern across the page, left to right, then down right to left, and left to right again. This page uses quick cut panels to enhance the Z reading pattern. ➡





## 9 ZOOMING IN AND OUT AGAIN

This page depicts an intimate scene between two characters. I opted to go with a simple grid panel layout and kept the camera position relatively stationary, instead creating visual interest and enhancing the drama by zooming in and out on the action inside the borders.

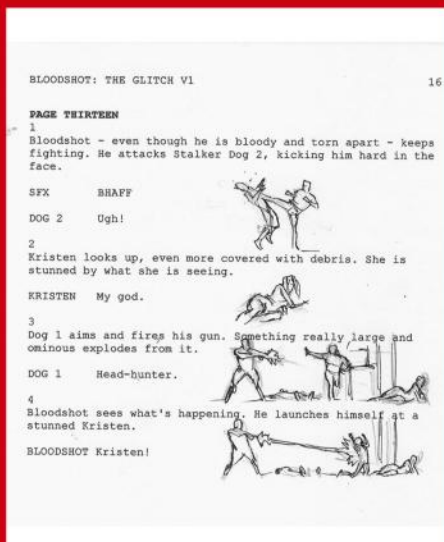


## 10 ACTING AIDS

A good visual storyteller is adept at conveying character intent and emotions through their acting. Pay attention to body language and facial expressions. Be careful, though. There's a fine balance between being too dramatic and unintentionally comical, and too dull or flat. A full-length mirror set up next to your drawing desk, a hand mirror, and a digital camera are essential aids for capturing the right gesture and expression.

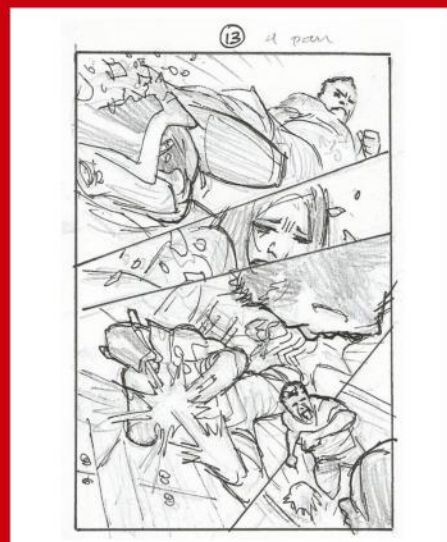
# FROM SCRIPT TO ILLUSTRATION BOARD

Lewis takes the writer's draft of a page in *Bloodshot* and turns it into fully rendered artwork



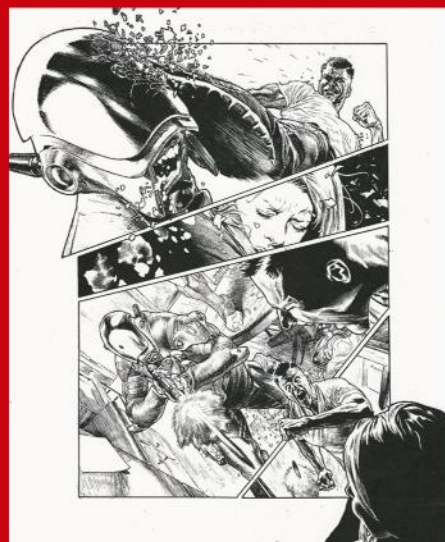
## 1 Panel by panel sketches

I print out the script and roughly sketch out the action in each scene as plainly as possible right on the page. Nothing fancy. No crazy angles. This is a great way to work out poses, spatial relationships, and the progression of action from panel to panel.



## 2 Thumbnail layout

Small layouts, or thumbnails, are drawn in sets of four on sheets of 8x11-inch typing paper that I've quartered to the proportions of the final drawing board. After studying the sketches I made on the script page, I meditate and visualise the best angles to 'shoot' each scene, floating the camera around the action in my head, and decide how to arrange the panels in the most dynamic and readable way possible.



## 3 Worked-up illustration

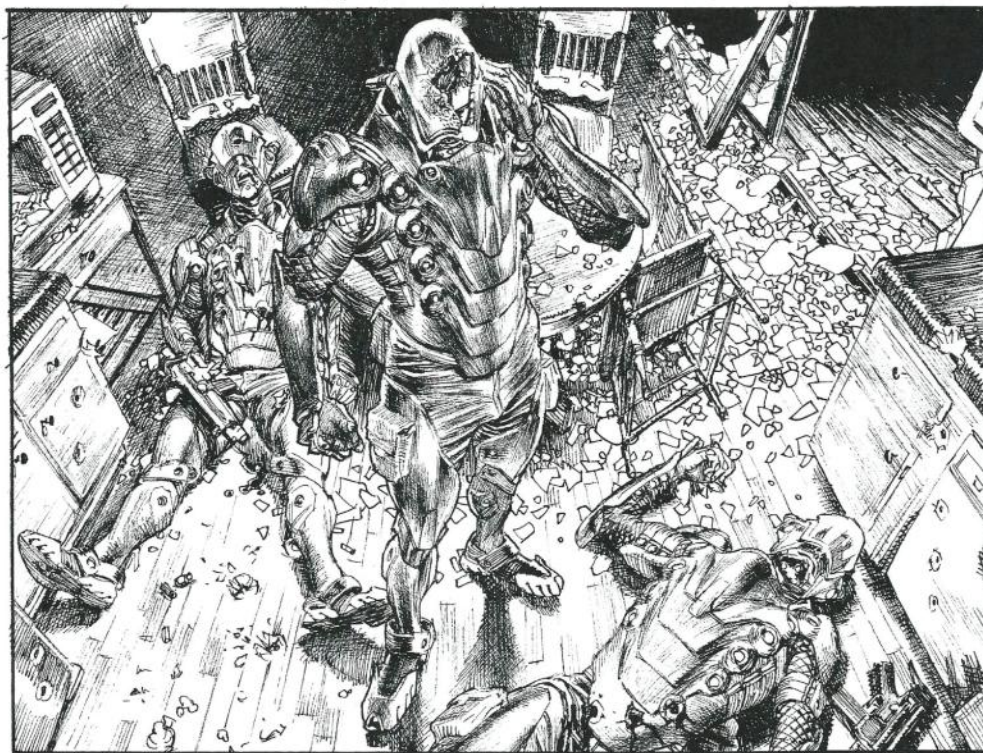
The thumbnail is enlarged and traced onto the illustration board with a lightbox. I decided to have the soldier's head explode through the border in the first panel, to give the kick maximum impact. I also placed the female character in front of the borders on the last panel to keep the foreground/midground/background consistent, since I had the male character behind her break the border.



## 11 BATTLE DAMAGE

In an action/adventure comic book, there's bound to be copious amounts of damage done to characters and their environments. Keeping track of the progression of damage from panel to panel and page to page gives added weight to the consequences of the violence taking place. A real sense of danger and, again, believability is created in the storytelling.

“Progressing the damage done from panel to panel adds weight to the consequences of the violence”



## 12 STATIC VS MOVING CAMERA

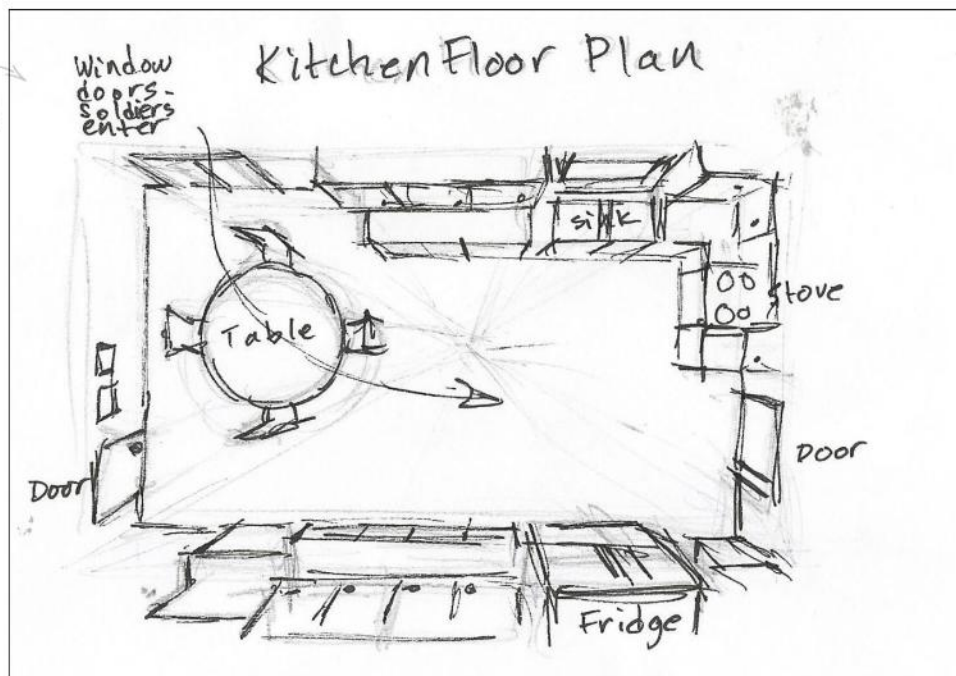
Page 15 of Bloodshot 25 has two distinct scenes. The first is full of action (two panels depicting a badly wounded Bloodshot gunning down a Stalker Dog soldier before finally collapsing). The second scene is relatively quiet. His wife cradles him in her arms. For the action scene, I kept the camera position relatively static to better emphasise the before and after action in this very busy scene. The static camera position makes the between-the-panels action nice and clear. For the second scene, since Bloodshot and his wife are being still, I was free to move the camera around to focus on each of their facial expressions. ➡





### 13 CONSISTENCY IN STAGING YOUR SCENE

Much of the action in this issue takes place in a kitchen. It was important that the layout of the kitchen was drawn up prior to choreographing the action for the sake of consistency and therefore believability. The big window door the Stalker Dogs burst through, the table Bloodshot and his wife were sitting at, the refrigerator, the stove, the door, the locations of the characters etc were all kept consistent throughout.



### 14 VERTICAL VS HORIZONTAL

Vertical panels portray shorter passages in time and tense moments; horizontal ones stretch out for open, relaxed moments. This page uses smaller vertical panels at the top to illustrate a quick, tense exchange between a villainous general and an insubordinate lackey. At the bottom, two big, wide horizontal panels are used to illustrate a relaxed scene of Bloodshot and his wife in a meadow.







“Constantly review the layouts to make sure there’s not a sameness from page to page”



## 15 SHAKE THINGS UP

Variety is key to comic book storytelling. Vary panel sizes, shapes, camera angles, use of blacks, compositions and figure size as much as possible within the script’s parameters. Constantly step back and review the layouts to make sure there’s not a sameness from page to page. Comic book visuals should be dynamic and change throughout the book to reflect the story’s tone, atmosphere, locations and action. **END**





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RESOURCES  
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PENCIL

PEN

INK

# PENCIL AND INK A GAME CHARACTER

Dive into the intricate, brooding shadows as **ANDY BRASE** uses line and ink for a deadly version of Ezio, the iconic killer from Assassin's Creed II

## WT

What could be better than getting a chance to draw some of the iconic characters from Assassin's Creed?

Being asked to make them darker and portray them as villains!

Those familiar with my art probably won't be surprised to know that I gravitate toward the shadowy and more mysterious characters. This often happens to be villains, anti-heroes and monsters. The Assassin's Creed characters are already quite dark, so this assignment was right up my alley.

Ezio, from the Italian Renaissance time period, was one of the assassins I was most drawn to at first. To show this character as a villain, I want to do it in a fairly realistic way using mood, shadow and the atmosphere of the drawing. I don't want to make him overly demonic or bring in elements that might be totally out of place in the Assassin's Creed world. I've always liked drawing statues and think it'll fit well with this image to

### ARTIST INSIGHT

#### TEST RUN

Test your pens on a separate practice sheet before inking, to make sure the ink is flowing properly when you work on the drawing.

bring in some elements that will build up a gothic atmosphere.

The focus of this workshop is on the inking and line work of my Dark Ezio drawing. This piece is made to be presented in black and white ink, so I'll be approaching the artwork in a way so that colour won't be needed. Having a lot of contrast and spot black shadows generally works well with drawings that will be in black-and-white. It gives more weight to the drawing if there are some heavy blacks present.

I'm often asked what tools I use to ink my art. Most of my detailed works are done with Sakura Micron Pens. Long ago, when I started inking, I used Rapidograph technical pens, but they started leaking and required a lot of cleaning, so I switched. Microns don't require any cleaning up afterwards and they also have more of a flexible tip than some technical pens. If you're new to inking it's always good to try out some different tools and see what works best for you. Many comic artists and other inkers prefer to use a



brush and ink to achieve a different line style and more thick-to-thin lines.

For me, Microns tend to be what I use most often. The following pages will give you a better look into my ink work. Now on to drawing an assassin!



Andy is best known for his dark character, creature and cover illustrations. Titles he's worked on include DarkSun, Kull,

Daredevil, Swamp Thing, Assassin's Creed, book covers for George RR Martin, and his own artbook/sketchbook titled Exorcism.  
[www.facebook.com/andybraseart](http://www.facebook.com/andybraseart)







**MATERIALS****PENCIL**

- Pencil
- Mechanical pencil
- HB lead
- Lead holder pencil

**PEN**

- Sakura Micron Pens
- Sizes 005, 01, 05 and brush pen

**INK**

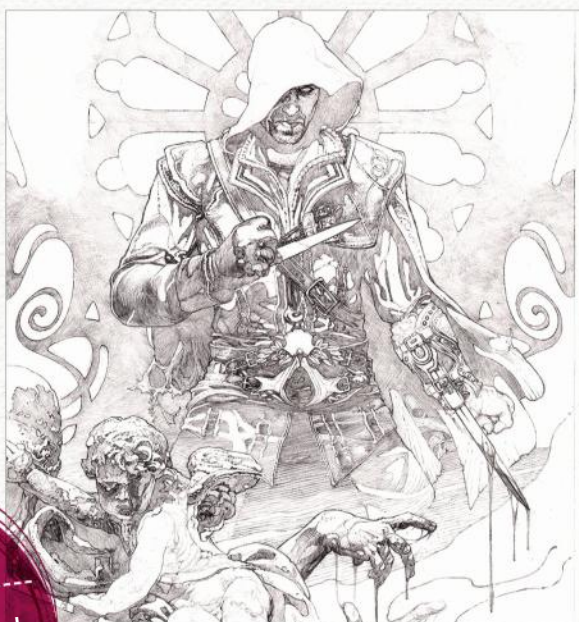
- Winsor & Newton White Ink (Opaque)

**MISCELLANEOUS**

- Design ArtGum Eraser/Cleaner
- Strathmore Bristol 400 series, smooth surface
- Kneaded eraser

**1 ROUGH SKETCH**

I start with a rough sketch to figure out the main shapes of the composition. Sometimes I do smaller thumbnails, but in this case I jump into a sketch at the same size that I'll be drawing the final. I add a couple of bloody hands near the bottom after I've done the initial rough.

**2 TRANSFERRING AND PENCILLING**

When I have the basic composition figured out and approved, I transfer this sketch with a lightbox to my Bristol board for the final drawing. Then I start pencilling in the bigger shapes, using a mechanical pencil and HB lead. Once I'm happy with this, I focus on adding more details.

**3 PENCIL FINISH**

In the tighter pencil stage I make sure to figure out all the important anatomy and composition issues. I correct any major problems with the drawing that were present in the rough version. Having a pencil drawing with a strong structure will help me to focus on the inking process.

**INKING TIP****DEVELOP YOUR STYLE**

Don't be too concerned about your style of inking. Style will build naturally when you're creating your art.

**4 STARTING TO INK**

Next I move on to the ink stage. I do the most of my inking with Sakura Micron Pens, sizes 005, 01 and 05. I start simply, by blocking in some of the black shadow shapes in the angel statue and on the assassin's forearm.

**5 SPOTTING BLACK SHAPES**

I continue inking some of the black shapes, moving up to the collar section. Because these are small black shapes, I outline them with a 01 Micron and fill them with a Micron brush pen. To make sure I'm not smearing my pencil work, I have a piece of scrap paper that my inking hand rests on, whenever it's on part of the art.







## 6 TEXTURES TO SHADE

Now that my hand's getting warmed up with the pen work, I move into more of the line work and ink textures. I use different ink textures to shade and build the shadows. I ink Ezio's shoulder, keeping in mind that I want to give the fabric a rough and gritty feel.





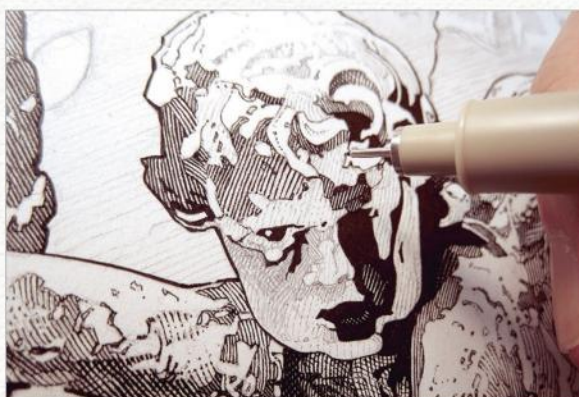
## 7 DEPICTING THE BLADE FIST

Now I decide to tackle one of the more important elements in the drawing, which is Ezio's clenched fist and blade weapon. I ink the solid black first, then build the values with line work, paying close attention to line thickness, spacing and the light source.

### ARTIST INSIGHT

#### WHITE IS RIGHT

Sometimes I use an opaque white ink with a brush to make small corrections, break up lines, or add splatters and stars. My ink of choice at the moment is Winsor & Newton's White Ink.



## 8 DETAILS AND VALUES

I move on to finishing the angel statue. Keeping in mind the lighting and the fact that I want a full range of contrast, I use lines to create the shadows. My lines curve around the surface and toward the light source most of the time, to give the statue form. I also add numerous cracks and marks to give the statue a weathered surface.



## 9 HAND DETAILS

Next to the statue are the hands of a victim, which are dripping blood. I decide that the blood will look best as a solid black, and ink this first. I continue to render the hands with line work. This type of detail work, like the statue, is done with the smallest size Micron, 005.



## 10 FOG AND WIND TEXTURE

I decide to have the assassin's body fade into a fog-like effect. This both adds a creepy atmosphere and helps the foreground elements to pop out more. I do this with lines, close to horizontal, that start thick and become thinner as they go down to his feet. Some wavy lines imply the sense of wind. The idea is to have the black shadows fade to grey and white to the viewer's eye.



## 11 DARK SHADOW TEXTURES

There are some areas on the drawing that I want to add dark shadows to, without making them completely black. Underneath the statue, the shadow area could have been done with a black fill, although I decide to add a cross-hatching texture to give it a rougher look.





## 12 DARK AND GRITTY FACE

Now for one of the most important parts: Ezio's face. Because this will require very tight and precise inking, I want my hand to be warmed up. I use a 005 Micron that's worn down a bit, which will help with small details. I want to give his face a very dark and rough look, so I add heavy stubble.



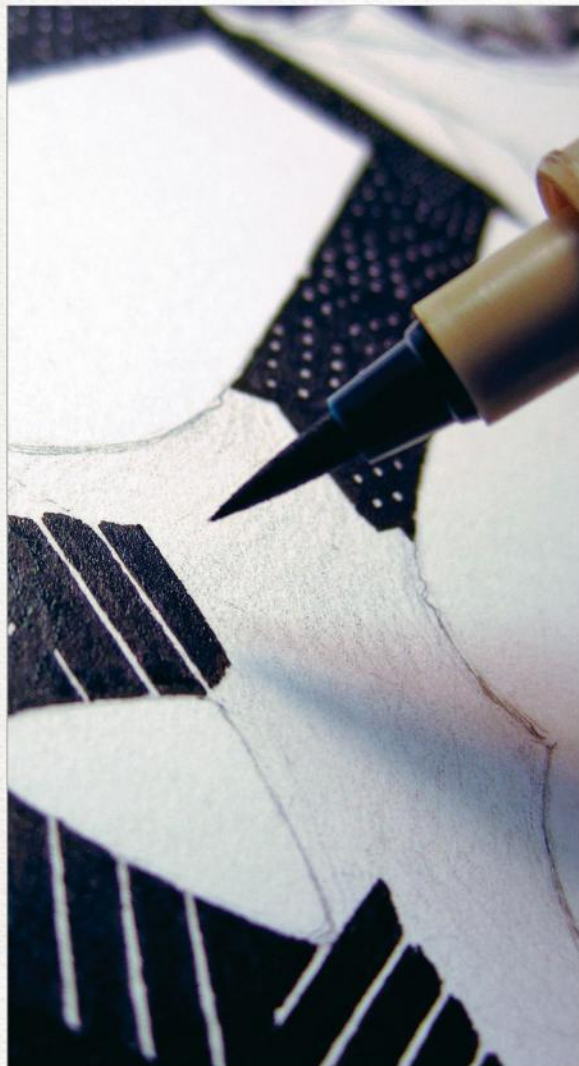
### ARTIST INSIGHT

#### PEN PERFECT

Sakura Micron Brush pens are a good and quick way to make small ink fills. For big fills, such as a black background, I break out the brush and ink.

## 13 TACKLING THE BACKGROUND

The main figure and foreground parts are now done. But to make them pop out more I decide to heavily ink the gothic window background. As I did in the darker shadow under the statue, I decide to add a similar texture to the background wall that fades into the fog.



## 14 BACKGROUND BRUSH PEN

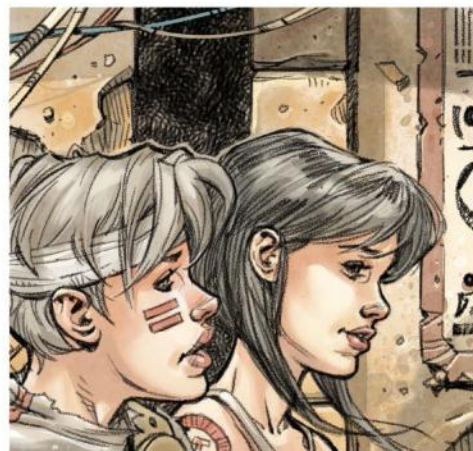
I ink the wall texture behind Ezio with a fairly mechanical cross-hatching pattern. I want it to appear flat but with a rough surface. At the top I ink thicker lines with a brush pen, then switch back to a smaller Micron for inking near Ezio's elbows and below. I draw thinner lines that begin to break up, to fade the texture into the fog.



## 15 FINISH AND CLEAN UP PENCILLING

Once I finish up the background, I call the ink drawing complete. However, I let the drawing sit for a while, sometimes overnight, then use a Design ArtGum eraser to clean up some of the pencil marks. I use the cleaner eraser very carefully, pressing lightly, so the Micron pen ink doesn't fade. If my hands are bleeding, I try not to get stains on the drawing! **END**





GET YOUR  
RESOURCES  
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VIDEO  
AVAILABLE

## CLIP STUDIO PAINT

# CREATE A COMIC PAGE IN CLIP STUDIO PAINT

Favourite 2000 AD artist **Dylan Teague** explains his process for creating a comic page in Clip Studio Paint

### Artist PROFILE

**Dylan Teague**  
LOCATION: Wales



Dylan has been a professional illustrator for about 20

years, working mainly for 2000 AD on everything from Judge Dredd and Strontium Dog to several Future Shocks.

<http://ifxm.ag/dylan-t>

**I**'ve been using Manga Studio, now renamed Clip Studio Paint, since version 4. Since version 5 I've used it for more and more of my work and now do 95 per cent of my stuff on it. In this workshop I'll show you my process for creating a comic page for my comic strip Code Name D, appearing in David Lloyd's Aces Weekly soon.

I'm trying to replicate a sketchbook type of look – pens, pencil, markers etc. I've created various brushes and also use

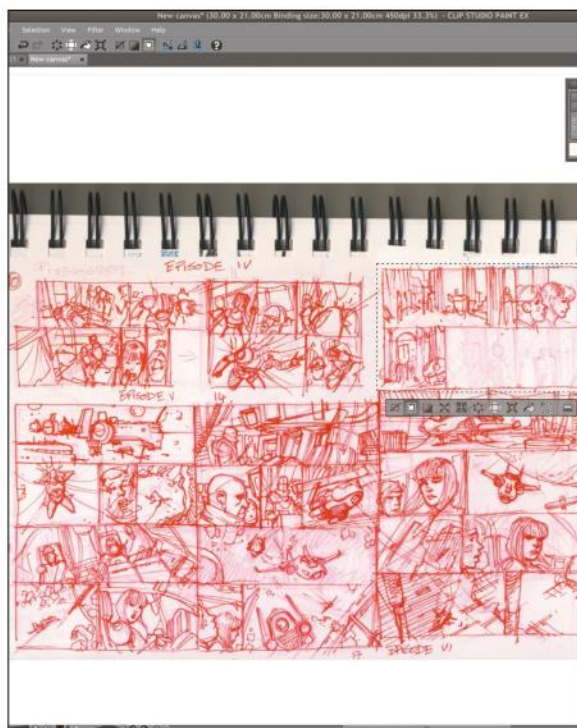
paper textures to achieve this look. I'm also really into '80s European sci-fi comics by artists like Gimenez, Moebius, Bilal and Serpieri, and I've tried to go for that limited palette look that they all use. I'm not much of a writer, so am relying heavily on the visuals on this! I'm looking to give the reader a good idea of what type of world they're in by putting a lot of work into the backgrounds.

I've used the story feature of Clip Studio, which really helps you keep on

top of the pages and speeds up stuff like panel bordering. It will also help later on when I get to add (and figure out what will be in!) the word balloons.

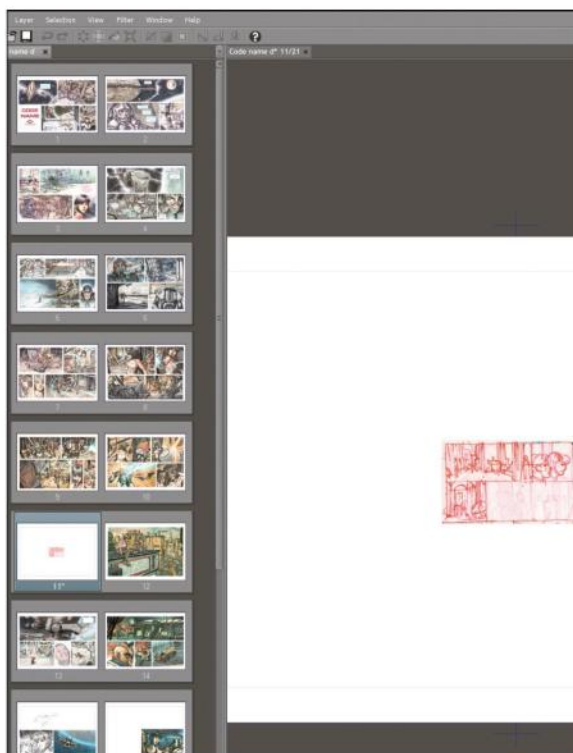
I've done a lot of preparatory sketches and doodling to give myself a good idea of the characters, vehicles and settings. I've also worked out the basic flow in thumbnails in my sketchbook. I'd also highly recommend going to life classes – I've been going for about 10 years and I think it's really helped my figure work.





### 1 Initial roughs

I still tend to do these by hand but they are very rough and just a guide for composition, really. I'm also not too sure about the last two panels, so will leave them to finish digitally. I tend to do roughs very small, as it's all about storytelling at this point and I don't want to get bogged down with the drawing. It's also easier to look at the whole page at this size so you can make sure everything flows nicely.



### 2 Scanning from sketchbook

I scan the image into Comic Studio Paint (CSP), I've already made a story template, so I open the correct page and import directly into that. I scan the page of roughs in pretty high resolution so that they'll be able to take the scaling-up. Once it's in I use the marquee tool to select the relevant rough and copy and paste. I'll save the other roughs for later as this will save time scanning in.

#### PRO SECRETS

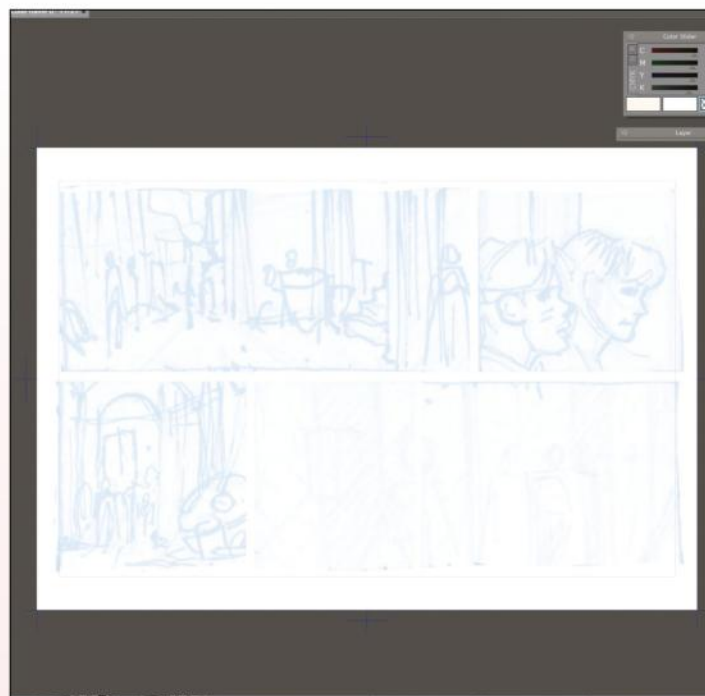
##### CUSTOM KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

A great thing about Clip Studio Paint is that it enables you to customise all of the tools to really suit your own workflow. I have a Magic Wand setup that will refer only to my flats layer – I've done this by setting the flats layer up as a reference layer. This means that whatever layer I'm on, I can use the wand for a clean selection without having to first select the flats layer. Many tools can be customised in this way: I also have an eyedropper that will refer only to the current layer, so that if, for example, you're using overlay textures, you'll still be able to pick the correct colour from your rendering layer without the overlay colours affecting it.



### 3 Resize to fit

I mess about a bit with the rough so that it fits the template correctly, using the transform and marquee tools to resize and move different bits to where I want them to go. When resizing I have the "Keep original aspect ratio" box ticked. This will avoid any distortion when altering the rough's size without you having to remember to hold down the Shift key.



### 4 Panel borders

I've set up default sizes across all the story pages so that the outer panel border will snap to the correct size and the gutters will be the same width. I lower the opacity of the roughs and convert the layer to blue. There's a little box in the layer window that displays this blue colour but you can pick any colour you like – when you hover over the box, a bucket will appear; click it and the layer changes to that colour. ➡



## WORKSHOP BRUSHES

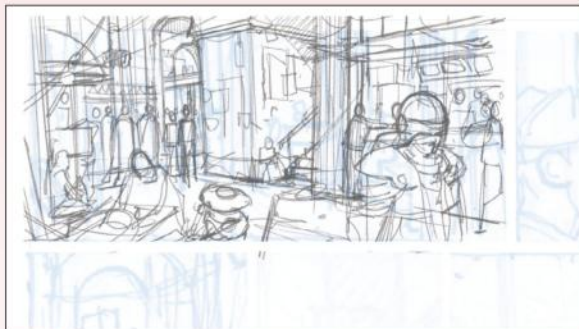
### CLIP STUDIO CUSTOM BRUSHES:

#### MARKER

I've tried to replicate a Copic marker with this brush.

#### SOFT AIRBRUSH

I added my own textured tip to the CSP soft airbrush.



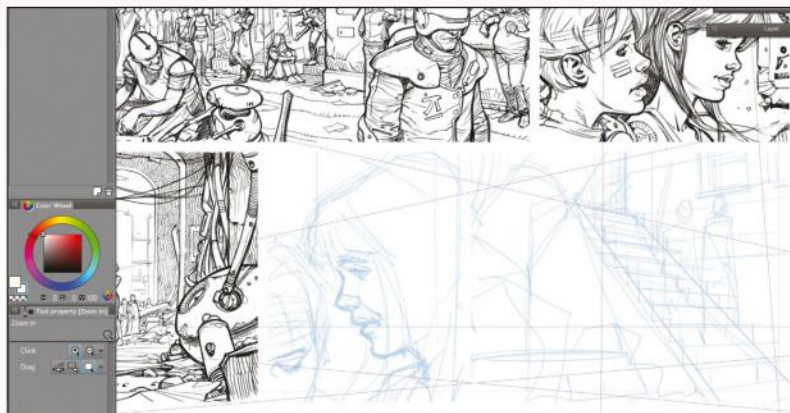
## 5 Start drawing

Finally on to some drawing! I start to refine each of the panels, keeping everything freehand at this stage. I'm undecided about the last two panels, so I'll come back to them later. I start off very loose and gestural, just rough shapes to indicate buildings, objects, people etc. I work gradually into these, refining and adding details as I go. This is definitely the most time-consuming part of the job!



## 6 Perspective ruler

This is one of my favourite features in CSP. I open up a three-point-perspective ruler layer and move all the points to match, as closely as possible, the rough pencils in panel one. Take note of all the little handles on the ruler lines: the little dots will just move the perspective rulers, the crosses on the lines will move the vanishing point along the horizon line (the main line with the green square on it). There are also little diamond shapes near each line, and clicking these will stop your tools snapping to that particular line. Holding Shift when moving vanishing points can set them to Infinity, too.



## 7 Refining

I make the rough layers blue and lower their opacity. Next I tighten and refine, thinking about line weights and shading: heavier lines bring objects forward, lighter lines send them back. I put a lot of work in here – I want the drawings to hold up on their own as the colouring will be quite simple.

## 8 Last two panels

Time to sort out the last two panels! Instead of going for two medium shots I decide on a close-up and a medium; this also ties this last image in better with the next page. I then add a two-point-perspective ruler to work out the staircase. The next page has the two characters sitting on top of a roof chatting, so putting the staircase in means this should now link up better.

## 9 Finished pencils

Just more refinement here until I'm happy that the line work looks finished. I always set my line art layers to greyscale and just tick the black box. I've set up a shortcut that enables me to use one key (4) to switch between the main drawing colour and transparent. Having the layer set up like this means that whatever colour you have, it will always come out as black. Having just the lines on the layer is good for later on as it means clicking the "Preserve transparency" box and then converting the layer to Colour mode enables you to change the colour of your line art.







## 10 Colour flats

Here I separate all the main forms. I do this so that when I come to render the colours I can refer back to these shapes for clean selections. The colours aren't important at this point – you're just separating different objects, parts of characters etc. When doing flats it's important to ensure that all of the tools you use – wand, bucket, pens etc – have their anti-aliasing turned off. This will mean you get clean selections later on.



## 11 Colouring

I'm trying to replicate a watercolour/marker feel in this strip, so rather than render on to my flats, I'm going to hide them by filling the rendering layer with white (the wand will still work as mentioned in my pro secrets on the previous page). I start off with some low-opacity gradient fills, then gradually work in more details and refinement with my marker brush. As with drawing, I start off loose and big and gradually go in and refine the details.

### PRO SECRETS

#### REFINING

Refining your drawing may take a few goes. If I'm not happy with the first attempt over the rough pencils, I'll convert that to blue and work over it again. What can also happen is that sometimes you'll lose the energy of the initial stages. This, for me, is where digital comes into its own – you can just pick and choose good bits and re-paste them in.



## 12 Texture Overlay layer

I add a paper texture over the colouring layer – this really helps give a more natural-media look to everything. I import the texture and set that layer to Overlay blending mode. I also mess about with the hue/saturation/brightness till the layer gives the desired effect. You can find tons of textures online but it can be good to make your own. A page of watercolour paper with a good tooth and some very abstract washes with inks and watercolour can make some great textures.



## 13 FX Screen layer

I create a new layer on top of the line work and set it to Screen mode. Using a bright saturated colour I can now pick out some glow effects. I've use it sparingly as I don't want it to overpower the image. I'm trying to replicate a kind of sketchbook look, so strictly speaking I shouldn't be using it, but I just can't resist – it always looks cool when you add a bit of a glow to a strip light or some kind of future tech!



## 14 Bump up some shadows

Panel 1 looks a bit flat – I need to separate out the planes a bit. You should always try to break things up into foreground, middle and background. To focus on the two figures in the mid-ground, I darken down the foreground. I make a selection around the bits I want, create a new layer, airbrush in some green and set the layer to Multiply. You can also tweak the shadow colour using hue/saturation/brightness. **END**



## PHOTOSHOP, ILLUSTRATOR &amp; MIXED MEDIA

# GIVE TINTIN THE FABLES TREATMENT

**NIMIT MALAVIA** combines traditional and digital media as he develops an engaging Tintin cover, painting the familiar while finding his own voice

## Artist PROFILE

**Nimit Malavia**  
LOCATION: Canada



Nimit has produced art for several major comics publishers such

as DC/Vertigo, Marvel and Dark Horse. His personal work has appeared in galleries in the US and Europe.  
[www.nimitmalavia.com](http://www.nimitmalavia.com)

**D**eveloping artwork for a cover is rarely simple. You must maintain the fundamentals of a standalone image, such as a strong composition with an interesting palette. But the cover also has to engage the reader so that it's not only appealing to look at, but also brings them into the story. Having seen some of my covers for Vertigo's Fables series, the

ImagineFX team suggested I take a swing at another established character: Tintin.

Working on famed properties such as this is exciting, but it brings a challenge of interpreting the figure in a way that enables me to paint an image that satisfies my creative needs while also remaining true to the character's original spirit.

This workshop will focus on showing the choices I make in conceptualising the

piece. It will give you a full process breakdown of the technical aspects of creating this image: touching on the different stages of roughs and approval; working up the image with traditional media; building the colours and values using an excessive amount of layers in Photoshop; title design; plus some personal techniques I use to re-inject some mystery into the final art.



## 1 NARROWING THE FIELD

For character-based projects, I often begin by researching their entire history, trying to find something to connect with. In the case of Tintin it was understanding that throughout his life he has been our gateway to unknown worlds and adventures. A perfect canvas. Once that ball

was rolling, the ideas couldn't be stopped. In Photoshop, using a customised Round brush that emulates a ballpoint pen, I develop eight black-and-white thumbnails, each with its own unique story and setting. I can't decide which one to go for, so I send them all to the editor for a decision. ➡

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RESOURCES  
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## PRO SECRETS

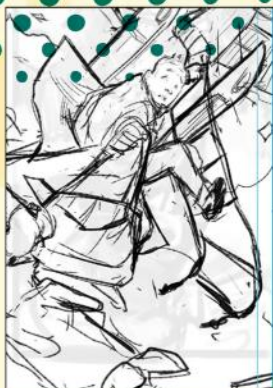
### LEAVING ROOM FOR CHANGE

When building a consistent working process, it can be difficult to keep the results feeling fresh. Often, once the piece is nearing completion, I'll apply adjustment layers and effects, such as Curves, and experiment with dramatic changes on the graph to see how I can affect the image. I usually focus on shifting the hierarchy of the values.









## 2 DECISIONS OF DIRECTION

We narrow it down to two options: Mayan Cave and Airplane Escape. Either idea would've been a joy to execute, but as exciting as the rope-ladder escape would have been, it makes Tintin feel like an action star rather than someone who is being swept up in the adventure, as he is in the comics.

### SHORTCUTS Inverting the image

Cmd+I (Mac)  
Ctrl+I (PC)

This helps me to see the  
Black and White  
balance.



## 3 REVISING AND REFINING

I begin revising the line drawing, making decisions on the design of the characters, environment, placing the blacks and using different elements to help navigate the viewer's eye – the shape of the fire, for example. I try to be as economical as I can at this point, keeping the lines simple and not investing too much time in the details.



### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

#### PHOTOSHOP CUSTOM BRUSHES:

#### HIGHLIGHT HARDROUND 351

A simple Round brush, with Flow and Opacity settings, used for blunt work and highlights.

#### OIL PASTEL LARGE 8

A brush that offers a raw drawing line and texture for rendering and fills.

#### ROUND SKETCH BALLPOINT PEN 5

This is like the Round brush, with additional texture and frayed tips to give a traditional quality.

## 4 PENCIL TO PAPER

From there I print out the image to be traced, using a lightbox and a 2H pencil, on to a 14x21-inch sheet of BFK Rives. Once the basic shapes are down, I switch to a Faber-Castell Schwarz Black and begin drawing proper. Along with articulating the details, I want to solidify my blacks.



## 5 LAYING DOWN FLATS

As my digital process becomes more and more involved, it's essential that I take the time to create aliased colour flats. They serve to help make quick selections on different elements of the image that I might want to isolate and treat individually, especially in a dense composition. Keeping them aliased also helps to ensure crisp selections.

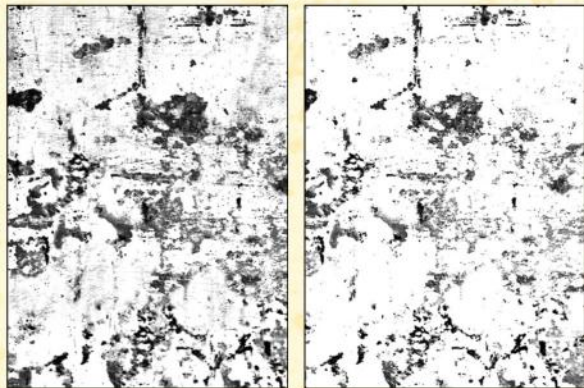
## 6 SETTING THE LIGHTING SCHEME

After laying down the colour flats I establish where my light source will be, and how the shadows will play on the figures and elements. I develop these with numerous Multiply layers, using an adjusted oil pastel brush, building the shadows of the piece in a very gradual way.

## 7 PAINTING IN VALUES

While the image is currently poorly detailed, I'm careful not to overpolish it. One usual pitfall is to render the same level of detail throughout the image. Despite all the articulation, it can feel static in the end. So I concentrate on more expressive painting techniques for the focal points, and limit the rendering in the secondary areas.





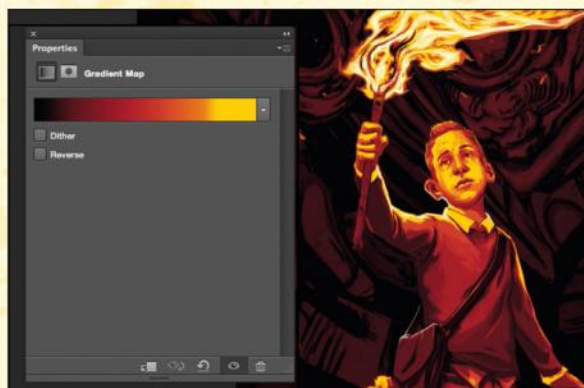
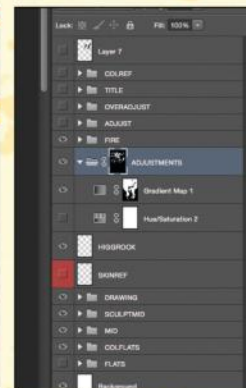
## 8 BRINGING IN ANALOG ELEMENTS

Usually by this stage of the process I start to worry about that dreaded static feeling coming in. So I begin reintroducing textures over the top of different layers to vary the look or enhance the inherent grit of the paper. In this case, I place two textures from a grunge set with reduced Opacity over the top of the sculpture layers.



## 9 WARMTH IN THE COOL AREAS

I need to bring some warmth and glow to the sculpture in the background. Using a gradient map adjustment layer and careful layer masking, I begin painting out the glow from the flames on the affected stones behind Tintin. I go in over the top of a Normal layer to add some specular highlights to the sculpture.



## 10 ATTEMPTING TO SPARK AN IDEA

Dissatisfied with how plain the colour palette has turned out, I try introducing more destructive adjustments to the image, trying to spark an idea or any kind of change, using Selective Color, Channel Mixer, Curves and so on. It does away with much of the work I've already done, but I find that Gradient Map offers the change I'm looking for.



## 11 LIGHTING A FIRE

Once I've finessed the colour choices from the original Gradient Map – the main goal being to find a complementary palette that unifies the image and keeps the warmth intact, using the flat selections in the layer mask – I begin dividing up the composition. This way I can reduce the effect of the Gradient Map on elements, such as the fire.



## 12 BRINGING HARMONY BACK

At this final stage, I look for any adjustments that bring balance and flow back to the composition as a whole. I decide that the foreground elements need to be further separated, so I go back into the midtones and I repaint the shadows of the layers to bring the cooler eggplant tones in. I then apply a texture Overlay layer with a low Opacity.



## 13 ADDING THE TITLE CARD

Customising and incorporating the title design into the image is one of the perks of the job I've luxuriated in most with my covers. It's a nice way to cleanly and cohesively wrap everything up. Since my execution is such a departure from Hergé's original creation, I decide that a simple traditional title treatment in Illustrator will be best. **END**

### PRO SECRETS

#### LIMITING YOUR COLOUR PALETTE

If you've started a drawing and find yourself uncertain how to proceed, building your values up in greyscale then applying limited colour using either an Overlay layer or Gradient Map adjustment layer can help to find a mood and focus for your piece. Experimenting with complementary warm and cool tones can be helpful, too.







## PHOTOSHOP

# PAINT HELLBOY CARICATURE ART

**JEAN-BAPTISTE MONGE** shares his thought process for recreating a comic classic, with a younger, cuter version of Mike Mignola's Hellboy

## Artist PROFILE

**Jean-Baptiste Monge**

LOCATION: Canada



Jean-Baptiste is an illustrator and 2D and 3D character designer

known for his goblin and fairy artwork. He divides his time between his self-publishing projects and different animation studios. [www.jbmonge.com](http://www.jbmonge.com)

**A**s a traditional illustrator I look on software as a tool – a powerful one that offers countless possibilities in comparison to traditional media. The main advantage is simplicity of use and the option to undo mistakes at any moment without the fear of ruining your illustration. It's simpler than oil, watercolour or acrylic paints, because you can step back. The only problem is knowing when to stop.

Like any medium, it has traps. You can easily lose yourself in useless details and quickly bury your idea. But you have much more control over several aspects of painting, including the composition and what your picture is telling you, which are by far the most important points, before dealing with the detail.

In Photoshop, I have reduced the selection of tools I use. My settings are quite simple. Even though I have lots of brushes I usually use five of them and

the Smudge tool, which I prefer to the Mixer Brush tool. I use masks, selections and gradients a lot and, of course, blending modes. I save often and regularly flatten my layers to keep the software running properly.

Recreating Hellboy, I'll approach the colour and light and make a volume render in almost the same way I would do using traditional methods, just quicker. I'll show you how to create an iconic character on a simple background.

GET YOUR RESOURCES SEE PAGE 146

VIDEO AVAILABLE

## PRO SECRETS

### MANAGE YOUR LAYERS

If you work with lots of layers, organise them using folders.

Take time to name them clearly. This will save you a lot of time in the long run.



## 1 FIND THE IDEA

Hellboy has a lot of personality. To set the mood, I sketch him in various poses from different angles. I doodle a lot, so I always have my notebook and sheets of paper near me, helping me quickly draw initial ideas for illustrations – digital or traditional. This time, around 10 or so little sketches give me enough to turn around an idea.



## 2 COMPOSITION AND CLEANING

A good picture tells a story. This is the starting point. Colour, light and atmosphere all help, but the drawing and composition are the base of your structure, so don't neglect them. I clean up the paper sketch, then I scan it at 300dpi. Next, I fix a few imperfections in Photoshop. ➡



## PRO SECRETS

## 3D SOFTWARE

If you use 3D software such as ZBrush, make a quick model based on your drawing to give it volume. You'll be able to choose your lighting angle and then see how your digital painting will be illuminated!



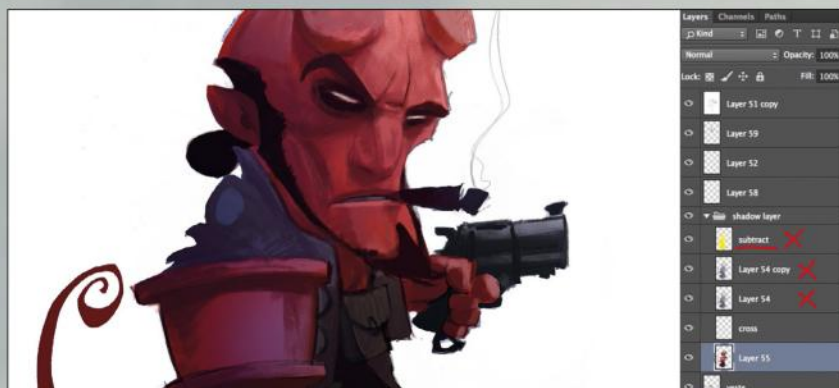
## 3 COLOUR MASSES

I focus on the character and start blocking in colours by making selections with the Lasso tool. I often fill areas with a gradient, because it quickly gives the idea of volume and diversifies the colour palette. Usually it takes me about an hour to find the right hues. Here things are simpler: Hellboy already has a colour scheme. It's mine to play with.



## 4 THE PRIMER

I paint with a soft textured brush. I use it as I would a primer in traditional painting. It's still rough, but this step helps me to give more volume to the main lines of the face and think seriously about the light. I start to visualise where I want to go with the colours, lighting and overall mood.



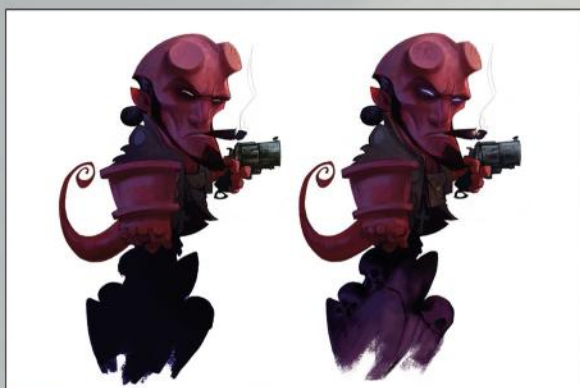
## 5 THE RIGHT MOOD

On a new layer, I paint over him with a blue-purple gradient, softly saturated, with Multiply set to 40 per cent to strengthen the silhouette. I duplicate the layer and change the mode to Overlay at 45 per cent. On a third layer I add a yellow gradient in Subtract mode, which removes the yellow from my channels and helps create a nocturnal feel.



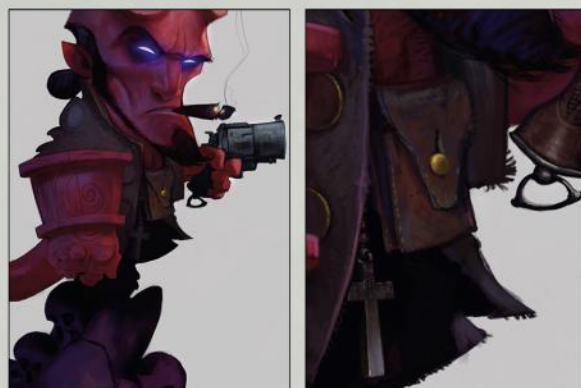
## 6 DEFINING THE LIGHT

Now my values are darker and I'm feeling the character more. I add detail to the skin and set the angle of the main light, which is top right. I paint an area of reflected light on the skin by following the colour defined in my shadowed areas and lightening its value. In this step I've used the Chalkwet brush a lot, for a gouache texture.



## 7 STARTING TO DETAIL

I use different textured brushes on the cloth and gun and work on the ammunition belt and the soft glow of the cigar. I start to detail the skulls and choose to stay in blue-purple hues so as not to draw too much attention to them. I often use the Smudge tool, with the tool preset to a brush by Sam Nielson, which makes it simple to mix colours.



## 8 ADDING BACKGROUND

I add a simple background and at the same time flatten most of my layers. I keep working on the character, adding more subtle details. Going online, I find some reference images of leather and metal. The darker the background, the more startling the effect. This is handy for the reflections on the metal, too.

## SHORTCUTS

Wacom stylus  
side switch buttons

I set the Down button to Opt for sampling colours. Up is set to right-click for Brushes mode.

WORKSHOP  
BRUSHESPHOTOSHOP  
CUSTOM BRUSHES:  
CHALKWET

My main brush for everything. It gives a nice gouache effect. I use the Cintiq's pressure sensitivity and barely touch the Opacity.



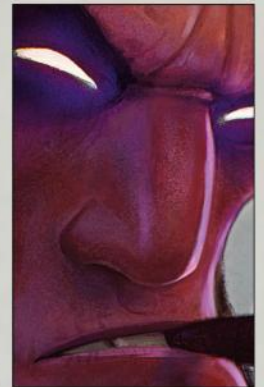


## 9 NATURAL BRUSH WORK

I use Photoshop as if I was painting with gouache. I like using the pressure on my stylus, barely modifying the Opacity, but I vary the flow, to give my brush strokes a more natural feel. Using Lighten and Soft Light blending modes, I give detail to the metal areas. I try a version with full horns, but I'm unconvinced and return to the sawed-off Hellboy.

## 10 CLEANING UP

Time to clean him up. I sharpen the face and gun on a flattened layer using a mask. I add flames on a dark background, shifted with Liquify, then switch to Screen mode to detail his head. So that it doesn't seem too regular, I apply a soft textured background, with Multiply at 13 per cent. Above this layer I add a radial gradient to give it some depth.

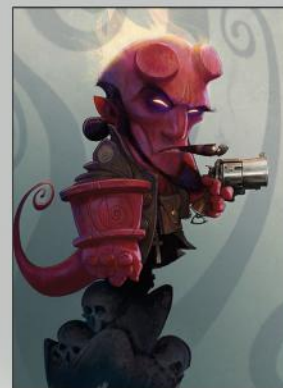


## 11 BACKGROUND INTEREST

Time to look at the background. Much as when I blocked in the colours at the beginning of my painting process, I trace a few tentacles with the Lasso to add some story. Then I convert to greyscale to check if my values are correct. I keep adding detail to the picture, referring to earlier steps to make sure I don't miss something interesting.

## 12 TAKE A STEP BACK

At last I pinpoint what was bothering me. By overworking some details, the face has lost its strength and been softened. To correct this, I work on the lines of the nose, the mouth and cheekbones in a snappier way and soften the Sharpen effect. Stepping back like this is necessary to restore the punchiness of the first draft.



## 13 WARMING IT UP

I boost the silhouette effect and look for the best effect for the skin texture, without falling into the trap of overworking it again. To make the colours vibrate a bit, I add a turquoise-blue layer, with Overlay at 4 per cent, and above this a dark blue layer in Exclusion mode. It warms up the picture and leaves a soft, smoky film in the background.

## 14 FINAL STEPS

Finally, I check that the dimensions of the picture fit the demands of the client and I return to the background to desaturate the skulls' colour with the Blending Mode Hue. I decide to use some elements from an older version, like the tail and few details of the silhouette that I lost along the way. After one final review, Hellboy is ready. **END**



## PRO SECRETS Experiment

Take risks in Photoshop, try many ways, modes and hues. That's its great power – and you can still undo anything that doesn't suit you.



## ARTIST INSIGHT

## WAYS TO WATCH THE WORLD...

**SOMNATH PAL** talks about learning through observation and empathy, to create art that's emotionally engaging and has a strong personal voice

## Artist PROFILE

**Somnath Pal**  
LOCATION: India



Somnath is an Indian independent artist, with a masters

degree in animation and film design from IDC, IIT Bombay. He illustrates, draws comics, works on films and drinks lots of decent filter coffee!

<http://ifxm.ag/som-p>

**F**ive years ago, I was a brat who was overconfident about my art skills. I drew the same four poses over and over again, but since I drew them well, it just fed my ego! Then I met one of my heroes, who was kind enough not to throw my sketchbook away, but harsh enough to let me know that I didn't know how to draw. "Your drawings have no life. You need to

feel what you are drawing. Your back needs to ache if you're drawing someone bending over," he said. Honestly, I didn't understand a thing. But it did set me off on a hunt to understand what he meant.

Three years later, after having regularly sketched every day, I got the first glimpse of what he was getting at. While drawing a girl sinking into her sofa, I realised I was sinking myself, to feel the pose.

This wasn't my only experience, though: there were numerous more that shaped my observation. Each of them opened me up to a world of possibilities. Through this workshop, I would like to share my ideas in the hope that they could give you that little push to explore the world for yourself. My aim is to help you personalise the worlds that you create through your art.



## 1 BEYOND REALITY

One of the exercises that I often do during my observational drawing sessions is stir things up for myself, just to turn the excitement dial a notch or two higher. I experiment with my drawings and go beyond the reality of the moment. Sometimes

I exaggerate the tension in the figure to levels that are not achievable by the human body, or push the existing scenario into a different world of physical laws. Purists might contest that this isn't observational drawing – and perhaps they're right – but I'm certainly having fun!





## 2 SPECIFIC PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

Crooked noses, hair styles, moustaches, tattoos, fashion accessories... there's so much to observe and recreate on the canvas when depicting human characters. And don't forget the patterns on various surfaces. They just add so much to an illustration.

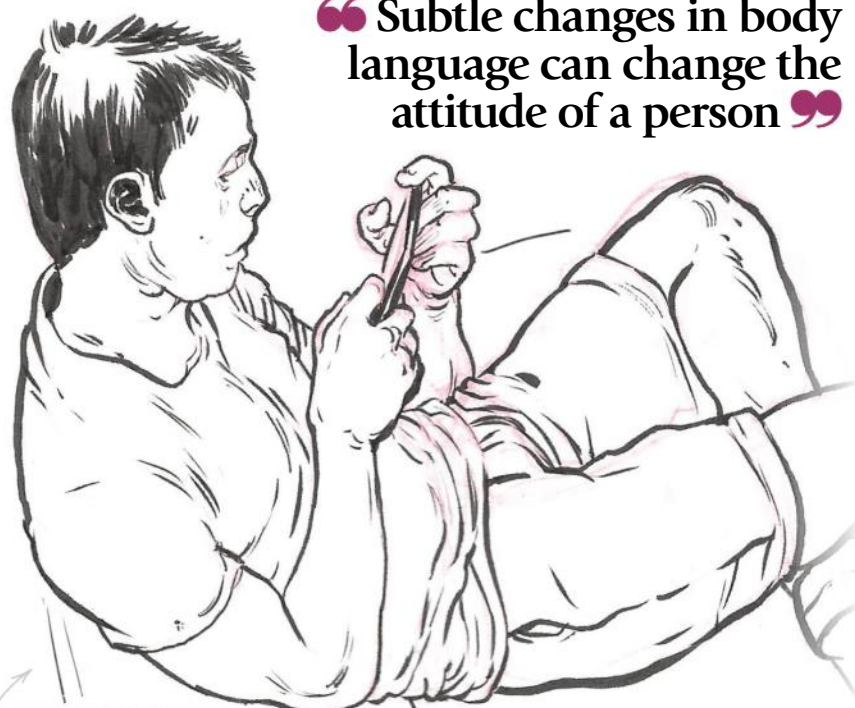


## 3 NUANCES

Observe how subtle changes in body language can change the attitude of a person. A raised eyebrow can add volumes, although there's little physical change. Nuances could be atmospheric, too. Imagine a young boy reading a book. On the wall is a poster of Lionel Messi. Switch the poster to one of Albert Einstein and there's a complete change in context.



“Subtle changes in body language can change the attitude of a person”



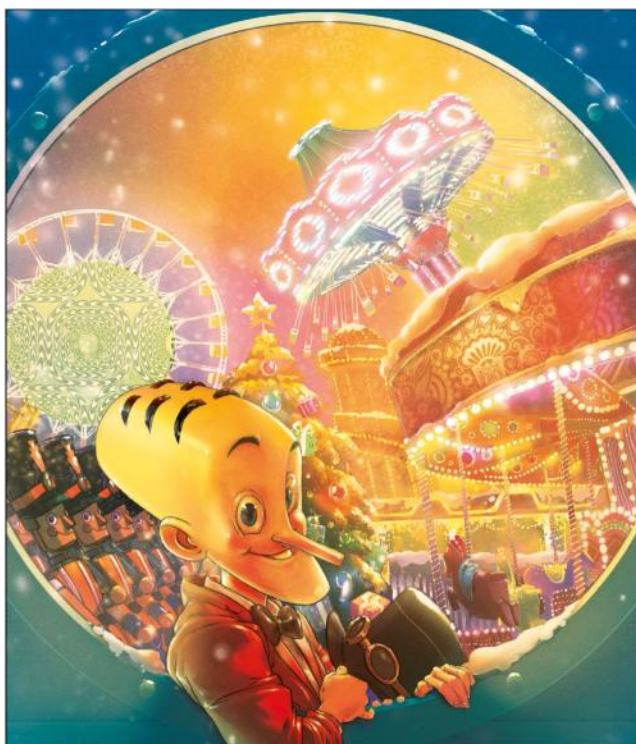
## 4 BREAKING SYMMETRY

Here's an early observation and important lesson I learned: our actions are rarely symmetrical in nature. Even the simplest of gestures like sitting or standing aren't evenly balanced. You'll often hear artists say that symmetry is boring, and this is simply because it makes things feel too organised and forced. Generally, if a moment is something that calls for attention – say, an action that's grand or epic – is resorting to symmetry the best way forward?



## 5 NATURE OF LIGHT

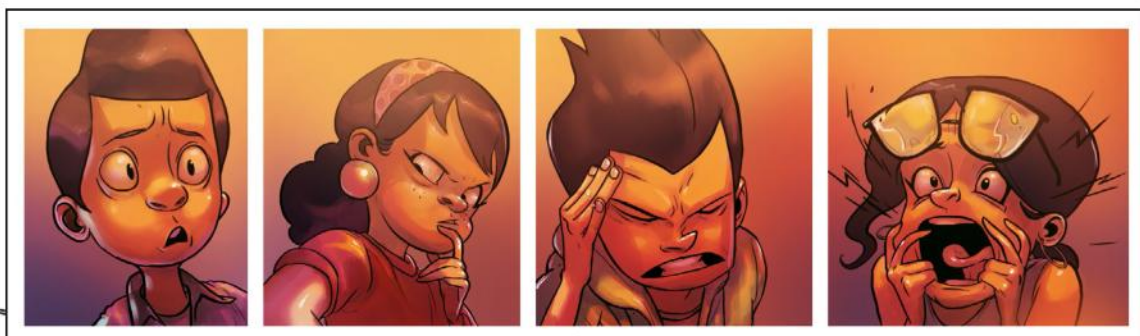
To understand light, ask yourself: is the light warm, cool or neutral? Is it direct or is there ambient light? How intense is the ambient light compared to the main light source? Is there a secondary light source? What's the nature of these sources: direct, rim or diffused? And note how intense the light from one source is with respect to the other.



## 6 TENSION AND RELAXATION

Any form will generally have a combination of tension and relaxation. It's one of the things that brings life into the form. Keep observing the switch between the two states. Student artists often ask me why their drawings look stiff. One of the most glaring issues I see is that people overlook which areas of their character's body are tense and which ones are relaxed. They draw hands, legs, the torso and so on well, but everything is almost rigid. If the entire body is tensed then the artwork will look stiff, too.

“You'll need a rich visual library to trigger ideas, so be on the lookout for the stranger things in life”



## 7 ACTING

Acting isn't just about the face. It's also body language. At any given point, the human form is involved in 'acting out' or communicating emotion. If you think it's enough to observe just the facial expressions, try acting in front of a mirror. Let's try anger. Do you feel your neck edging forward, or some neck muscles stretching? Some tension in your flexor group of muscles in the lower arm? Is your whole body moving forward? Now you see it, don't you? This is gesture drawing.





## 8 TAKE NOTE OF ANOMALIES

Is there something you observe that seems like a misfit? Okay, to tease your grey cells, imagine a pistol in the bedroom of a 15-year-old. Now, that's wrong and highly unlikely, but maybe you'll come across something less dramatic, such as someone using a first-generation Nokia phone, or a Rubik's cube in the hands of a four-year-old. While you can cook these up from memory for your next project, you'll still need a rich visual library to trigger ideas at the right time! So, be on the lookout for the stranger things in life.



## 9 SECONDARY STORY

Can you see a story evolve in front of you? Perhaps it's something as mundane as the struggle of someone holding a mug of hot coffee (conflict), then using a tissue to blanket the mug, and holding it more comfortably (resolution). Even if it's not the intended story, these little beats can help add a secondary level of narration to your artwork. ➡➡

# HOW IT ALL COMES TOGETHER

Somnath explains how his observational techniques enable him to create a composition that speaks volumes



## 1 Contrasting elements

The brief is about a well-educated psychopath who kills people out of boredom. Her contrasting nature reminds me of the opposing forces of yin and yang, which in turn guides my composition. I'm particularly careful about the nature of clothes – how the folds in jeans would behave different from those in cotton.



## 2 Capture the emotion

For my values, I follow up on my thumbnail. The cultural aspect is reflected in the woman's clothing and personal style. The driving emotion is callousness, which I try to depict through the woman's irreverent attitude – checking her phone. The bowl of potato chips initially seems a total misfit, but actually adds to the irreverence.



## 3 Colour plays its part

I want the colours in the composition to be eccentric and choose to stay away from realism. Since the bottle of wine (originally bottom right) isn't adding a secondary story, I decide to replace it with a provocative magazine, but tone it down so that it doesn't grab attention away from the main story.



**10 DRIVING EMOTION**

I want to distinguish this from acting. The dominant emotion is the mood of a scenario before you. Here's an example: there's a frenzy among a group of fans because the home team has just won a league match. People may react differently, but the dominant emotion is one of euphoria. If it's a split-second emotion, you might not have the time to draw it, so just capture the essence in your memory and then make gestures to document it. You can also present it as the mood that you want to document.

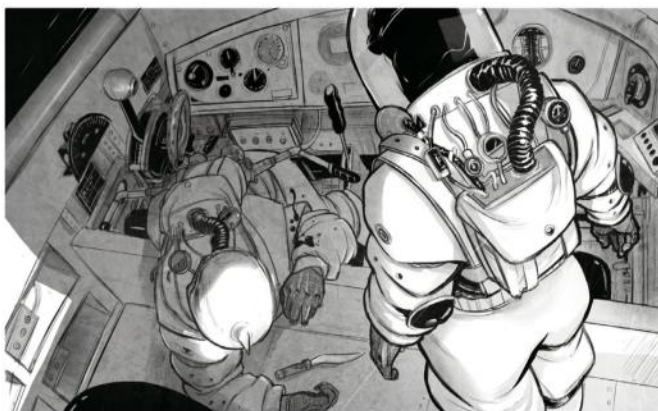
**11 TACKLING YOUR VALUES**

I had trouble doing value studies. Somehow I couldn't put similar values together. So I reinvented the wheel for myself. I started with pure blacks documenting only in black and white. A nearby coffee shop was an excellent place for my studies because it had strong overhead spotlights. These created crisp shadows and were easy to document. Slowly, I started introducing greys. I still have to think about values, though – they don't come naturally.

**12 SPATIAL INTERACTION**

Have you ever observed a person positioning themselves in a way that they almost fit into a particular space? Or a person's arm going around the edge of the sofa as they lean on it? While a bowling

ball wouldn't make adjustments to fit in, we often do. It's enlightening to observe how we – knowingly or unknowingly – make adjustments to interact with our environment. You can also observe the tension and relaxation at such times.





### 13 NATURE OF MATERIALS

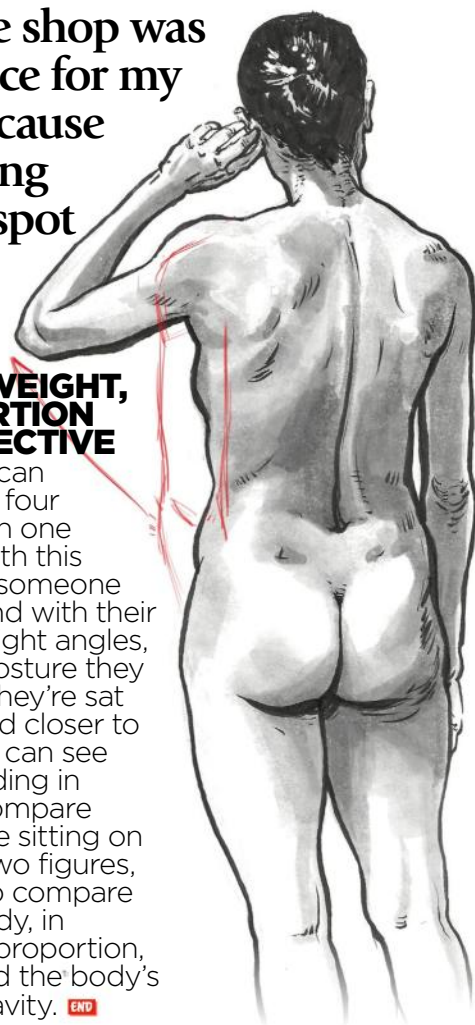
While I was working on the sets of a film, I noticed the nature of walls: how they reflected light, the way they age, their weight distribution, and so on. The nature of different materials means that they offer the artist a range of exciting possibilities. Only when you know how a material behaves under different conditions will you be able to portray it realistically. Observe the folds on a leather jacket and those on a cotton shirt, or the sharp highlights on a metal ball versus those on a rubber ball.



### 14 CULTURAL UNDERPINNINGS

Culture is an all-encompassing term here. It includes regional, political, racial or even scientific culture. If you observe certain cultural underpinnings of a group or an individual and document them, then it'll help you define the personality of that group or individual a little more.

“A coffee shop was a great place for my studies because it had strong overhead spot lights”



### 15 FORM, WEIGHT, PROPORTION AND PERSPECTIVE

The only way I can deal with these four heavyweights in one paragraph is with this exercise. Make someone lie on the ground with their knees bent at right angles, similar to the posture they achieve when they're sat on a chair. Stand closer to the legs so you can see the figure receding in perspective. Compare this to someone sitting on a chair. In the two figures, you'll be able to compare parts of the body, in terms of form, proportion, perspective and the body's response to gravity. **END**





## PENCIL, INKS &amp; PHOTOSHOP

## BRING COLOUR TO BLACK PANTHER

**KEN LASHLEY'S** Black Panther is brought to life by **JUAN FERNANDEZ**, a pro colourist who passes on a decade's worth of comic industry advice

## Artist PROFILE

**Ken Lashley**  
LOCATION: Canada



Ken is an in-demand comic artist with more than 20

years' experience, who's created artwork for the likes of DC Comics, Marvel, Lucasfilm, Hasbro and Mattel.  
<http://ifxm.ag/ledkilla>

## Artist PROFILE

**Juan Fernandez**  
LOCATION: US



Juan has been working as a comic book colourist for 10 years,

providing colours for a variety of titles published by Marvel, DC Comics, Image Comics, IDW and Heavy Metal.  
<http://ifxm.ag/juan-f>

All images © Marvel

SHORTCUTS  
Smart Lasso tool

Alt (PC & Mac)

While using the Lasso, hold Alt to lift your pen without closing the selection. To resume lower the pen and release.

**B**lack Panther was the first superhero I really identified with. I'm a huge fan of the character. Over the past few years I've had the chance to work on the comic and it's always a blast.

When showing the process of how a comic image is created there are always a few creators involved, usually a penciller, inker and colourist. I've been inking my own work for years now and I've become more comfortable as I move forward in

my career. So I decide to treat this workshop like I do my day job, and ask my colourist to do his thing over my inks.

I start my work the same way I do all my digital work: I lay down some rough areas and just get rolling. I open the work up by not overdrawing, letting the colourist have room to create. Juan Fernandez does some amazing work, and finishes the piece with great style.

I begin this drawing by laying down my red pencil. I use red because the lead

doesn't become waxy when I ink over it.

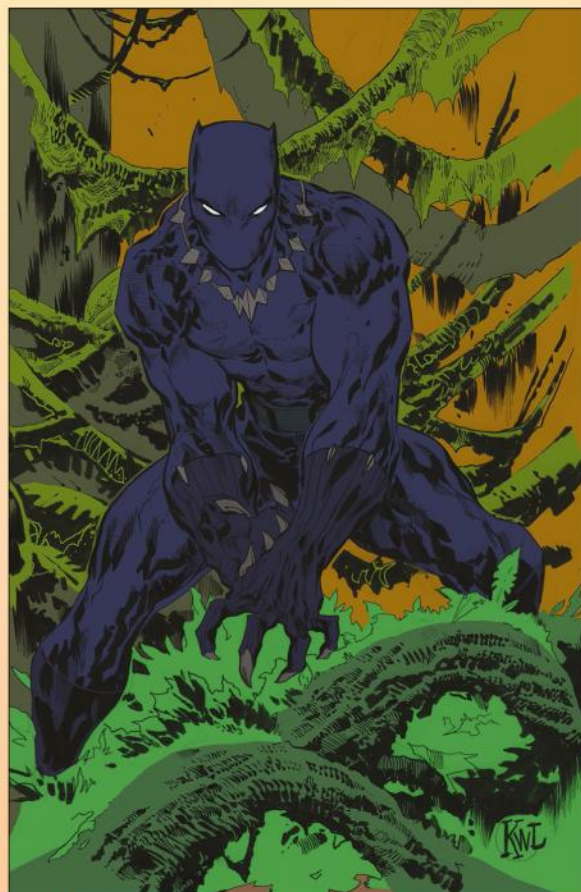
I use a lot of smaller pens and build up the line weights. I don't do roughs usually – certainly not in this case.

After finishing the inks I create a "clean" version. I take the full-colour scan, turn the image to Black-and-White in Photoshop, then turn down each colour. I then go to the Levels function and increase the black and decrease the grey. Now it's saved and ready for the next phase. It's colour time. Over to you, Juan.



## 1 Take the line art

Ken passes over his detailed line art of Black Panther and gives me a breakdown of what's going on in the scene. He tells me the dark jungle is lit by a bright light source from behind, as the figure poses menacingly in the environment.



## 2 Use colour to separate details

Every piece I work on, I start out by separating as much of the details as possible. These colours are not necessarily the hues I would use to work on, but just very contrasting ones to help with the separation.



GET YOUR  
RESOURCES  
SEE PAGE 146







**PRO SECRETS****DON'T BE AFRAID TO EXPERIMENT**

I often meet aspiring artists whose pieces are either too stiff or resemble another artist's style too much. In this digital era there's no excuse for not trying out different techniques. We're all inspired by the works of artists who came before us. Yet to establish an identity and a unique style, we can't just replicate what we've seen done. One must interpret that which inspires us and incorporate it into what we already know, building up a toolbox of techniques along the way. It's by experimenting and interpreting that you end up developing your own style.

**SHORTCUTS****Duplicate Hue/Saturation**

Cmd+Alt+U (Mac)

Ctrl+Alt+U (PC)

Apply the same tweaks to another layer or selected area.

**3 Adjust the flats**

I then go on to adjust the flats to the hues I want to work with, preferably going for dark and desaturated colours. This approach enables me to render from dark to light for the majority of the process. It's important to keep this layer locked, to avoid making any unwanted changes that could affect selecting areas with the Magic Wand tool.

**5 Rays of light**

I then like to tackle the main figure or focal point of the piece, and add elements to the background that may contribute to the overall rendering of the figure. For this piece I decide to introduce some light rays coming in through the trees. They help me achieve some depth and separation between the Panther and the background trees.

**4 Lighting considerations**

The order in which I work is a bit unorthodox. I start by roughly laying down a light source and noting how it would affect the main figure. In this case I thought it would be interesting to see some secondary lighting coming from behind and through the foliage, which would give us some interesting rim light.

**6 Tweak the necklace and other adjustments**

Once I'm happy with the rendering of the figure I go on to make a range of adjustments in the image. At this point I change the hue of the necklace from yellowish bone to silver accents, so that it stands out. The background starts to take shape, as I add details to the foliage. To avoid getting carried away with over-rendering and wasting precious time, I like to paint areas in, instead of rendering individual leaves.

**7 A faster workflow**

To help me keep my speed up I like to have a layer with all the swatches specific to the piece. This enables me to move faster while selecting hues to render with. Most of the time it's easy for me to recognise what every swatch is for. However, if a swatch is used for something minor then I tend to write a note next to it to remind me what it's for.





## 8 Adding atmosphere

It's time to introduce some accents and effects. The strong light source coming from behind means we should see some particles in the air and some fog near the bottom, to help give the piece atmosphere. Using layer styles such as Multiply and Overlay, I add cooler tones to the bottom of the piece. These help guide the eye towards the focal point.



## 9 Thinking ahead

In the layer stack you'll notice that I keep all of my detailing in separate, transparent layers. This enables me to specifically adjust certain details as required after turning in the preliminary piece to the editor or client. In this industry, speed is essential, and most of these steps help me tackle revisions as fast as possible, without sacrificing quality.



## 11 A balanced piece of comic art

Hiding the line art helps me check that the piece is balanced and not overdone. This is the process I use in all of my comics work and, though some steps are specific to me, it's pretty standard for colourists in the industry. However, there isn't a right or wrong way to achieve what you want. I hope it helps you develop your own workflow. **END**



## 10 Ensuring visual flow

Before calling the piece finished I like to take advantage of the controls in the Camera Raw filter. It's perfect to adjust Levels and the intensity of specific hues, pulling out details and setting back others. This way I can make sure the piece flows properly and the viewer's eyes are guided where needed.



### PRO SECRETS

#### THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG

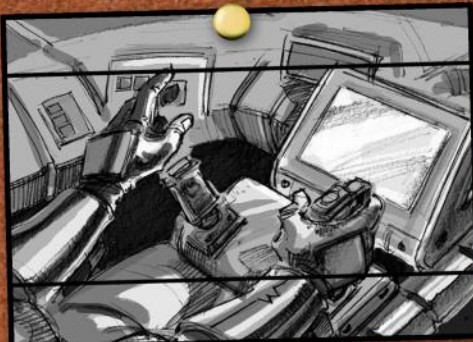
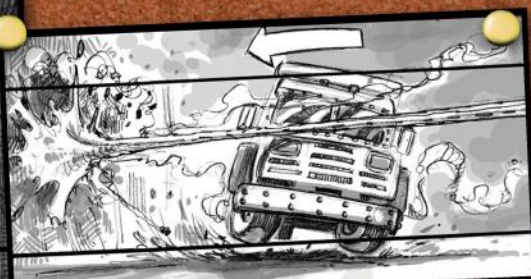
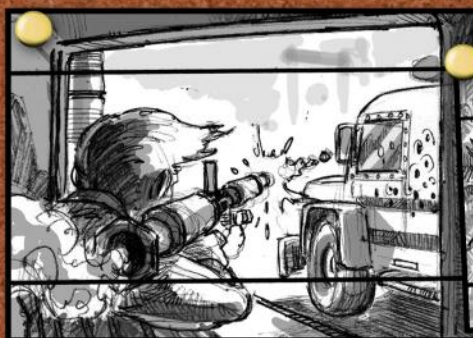
Yes, there are a lot of rules and guidelines about proportion and colour and so on. However, what makes a piece successful is its ability to tell a story, communicate an idea or generate a feeling. I'm often asked how I achieve certain things, but there are always other ways to get what you want. Don't worry about how another artist did something, but instead try new ways to communicate ideas. Loosen up and stay creative.

### PRO SECRETS

#### MAINTAIN FOCUS AND BALANCE

Sometimes we get carried away trying to add the most intricate details to a piece and in the process lose the focal point. Then, when we pull back to look at the piece as a whole, we wonder why it doesn't seem to work. To avoid this, before I get started I like to determine where I want the viewer's eye to go. This identifies what's important inside the frame, so I don't waste time on details that might clutter the piece and affect the focus. One good exercise to help out with this is gestural drawing. Get down simple sketches using suggestions of detail, instead of trying to capture and render every little detail.





## ARTIST INSIGHT

# BRING YOUR COMICS SKILLS INTO FILMS

### Artist PROFILE

**Jim Cornish**  
COUNTRY: UK



Jim has been creating storyboards for the film industry for

over 20 years, on such blockbuster titles as Harry Potter, Christopher Nolan's Dark Knight films and Skyfall. He now lives and works in the south-east of England.  
[www.jimcornish.com](http://www.jimcornish.com)

Storyboards for film sequences, just like comics, interpret and visualise a script. **JIM CORNISH** reveals his working method...

**N**umerous comic artists also work as storyboard artists for film, and the disciplines are very similar: both are all about transforming a script into a sequence of images. A storyboard artist is part director, designer, writer and cameraman, required to be imaginative and creative and to think outside the box. Whether it's a Bond movie with multiple exotic locations and stunt-driven action sequences or a musical such as Phantom

of the Opera – a studio-based drama where visual impact is paramount and dialogue is limited – the storyboard artist's talent and skill are put to the test. You're directing on paper... but ultimately you're still just a pencil monkey.

When faced with a stack of script pages and a blank screen or sheet of paper, there's always that intimidating moment when you wonder how on earth you're going to get started. It's the beginning of a journey, and each one is different from

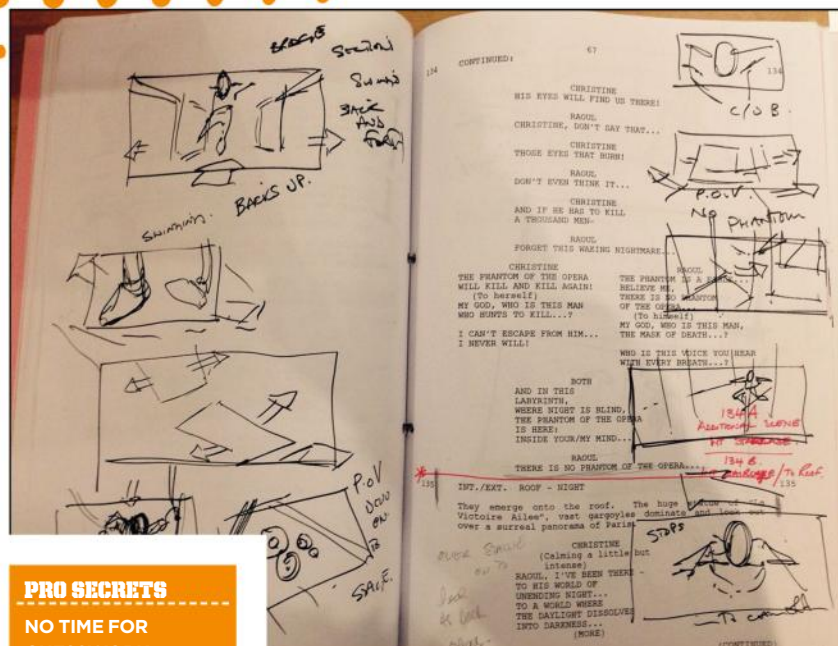
the last! But in reality, getting started is the easiest part. It's when you have the freedom to put your ideas down, free from the inevitable constraints that influence the sequence as time goes on.

From initial script breakdown to thumbnails, rough drafts through to the finished distributed pages, in this workshop I'll aim to talk you through some of the steps, processes and considerations that present themselves when storyboarding for film.









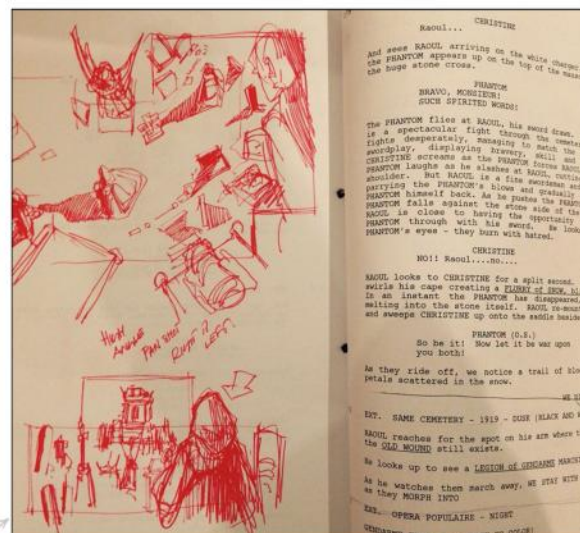
### PRO SECRETS

#### NO TIME FOR GUESSWORK

When storyboarding, keep your images clear – their primary function is to impart information. If they don't do that but instead leave people guessing, then they're simply useless.

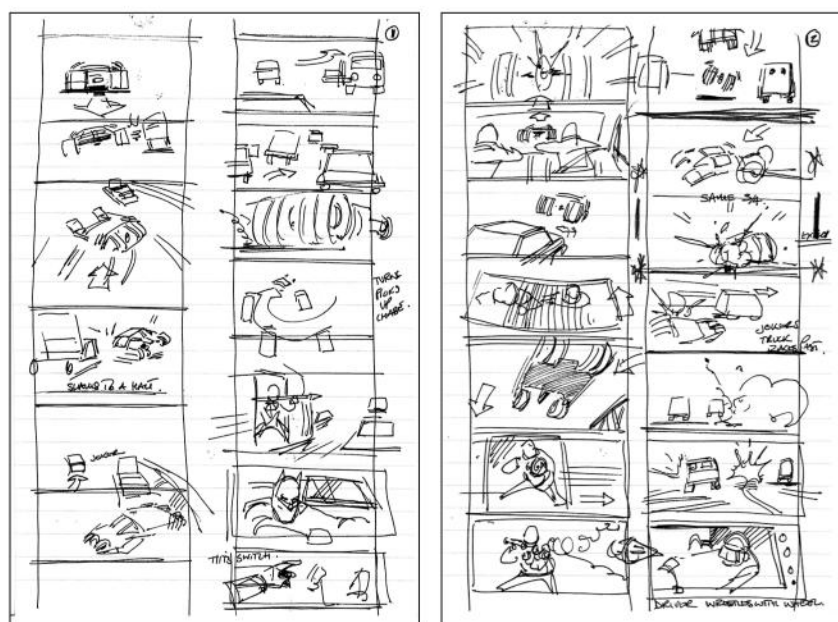
## 1 START WITH A SCRIPT... MAYBE

Reading the script might seem an obvious place to start, but it's not always that simple. Storyboards are part of the pre-production stage, which means they happen relatively early in the development process of a film (ideally). So there might not be a completed script when you start your labours. Sometimes there'll be a synopsis or story outline, or you might be working from a verbal brief after a meeting with the director.



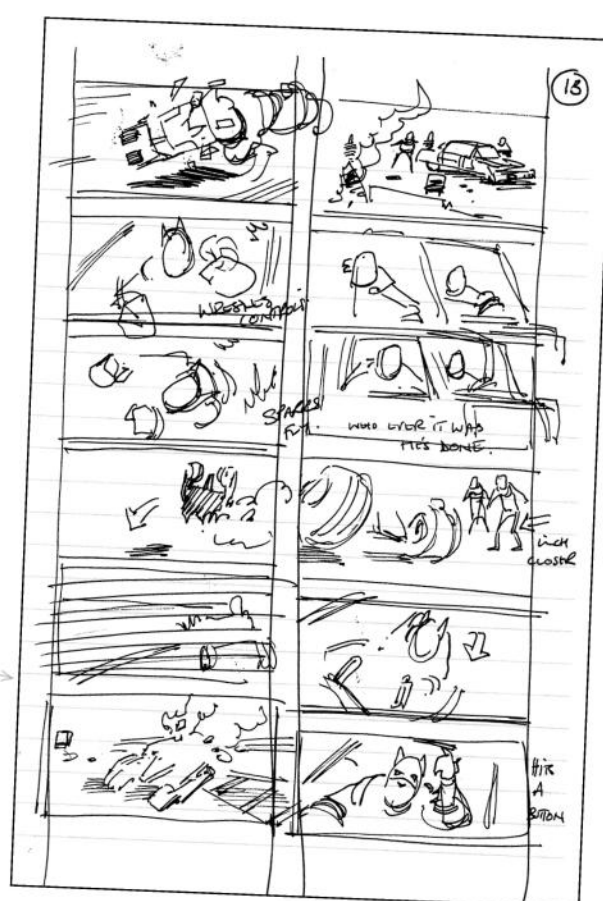
## 2 IDENTIFY THE BEATS

My favourite part of the process is breaking down the script or brief, picking out the important story points, developing the beats and working them into a coherent visual storyline. Where does our hero need to be, and why? What happens at a particular moment? What motivates certain characters' actions and responses and are there any alternatives? I'll often just write things down first, to get the chain of events straight in my own mind. Then I can start to relate the action to a set or location, and it's at this point that images or angles start to suggest themselves: the dramatic highs and lows start to move to the fore.



## 3 PRODUCE THUMBNAILS

Next I start thumbnailing, just thinking on paper in a quick shorthand. This stage is all about action and angles: how to compose shots while telling the story in a way the audience can understand. This becomes my blueprint for the sequence, and is when you have the most creative input, trying various permutations to see which angles and setups are the most effective. It's not about the limitations of the script, but more about maximising opportunities and pushing the boundaries.



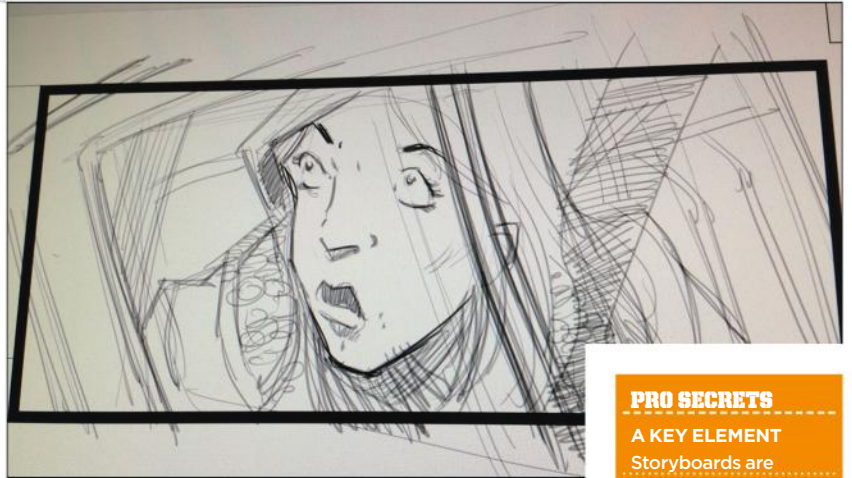


#### 4 DRAWING THE DETAILS

Once you have something you're happy with in terms of structure, you can start to work up more detail. It's important to realise, however, that these early drafts will almost never make it to shooting. Storyboards are merely a visual representation of ideas, so are always subject to change at any stage of production.

#### 5 IDEA OF COSTS

Producers use storyboards to help estimate budgets. It's easy to write "and the ship sank," but until you see how the director visualises that sinking you've little idea of the cost. That's where storyboards come in. It's the same with the art department, stunts, locations, VFX and special FX. It's when the feedback starts coming in that the process of evolution takes over.



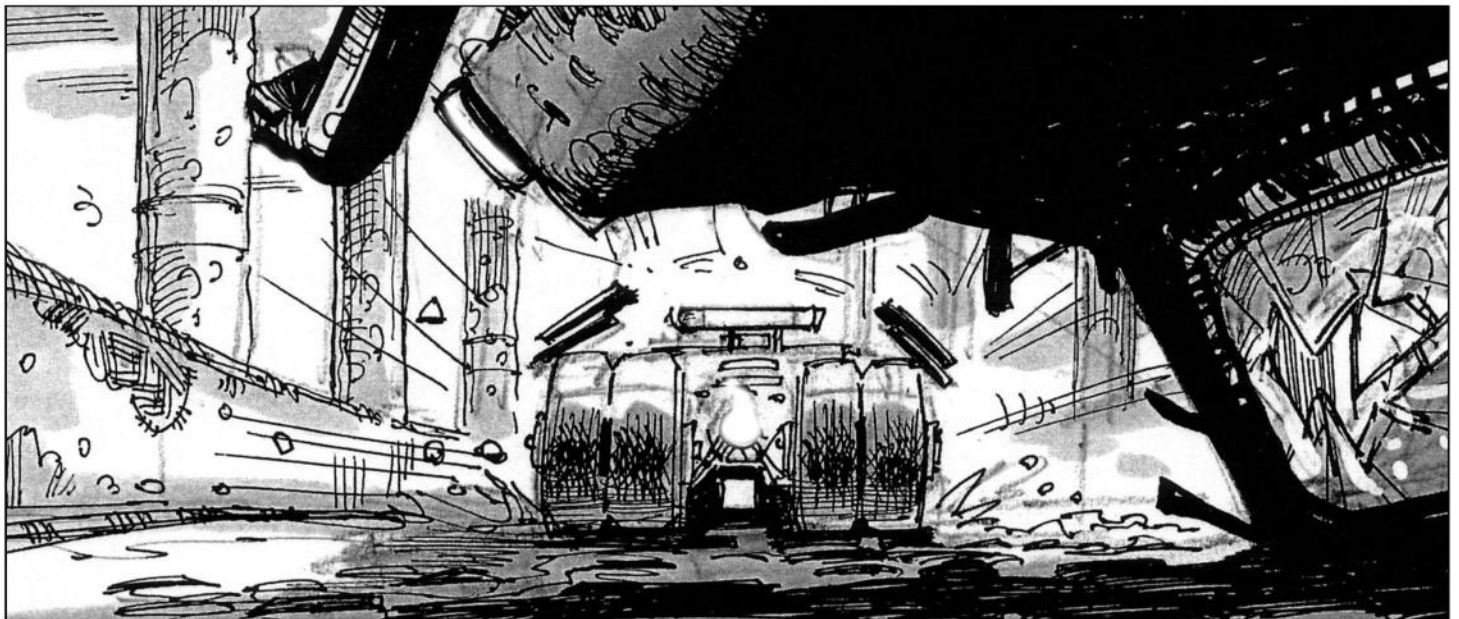
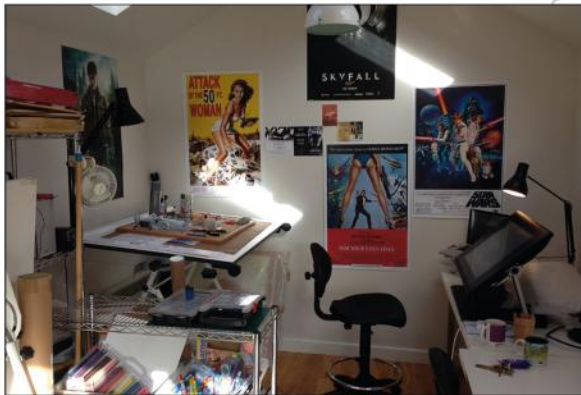
#### PRO SECRETS

##### A KEY ELEMENT

Storyboards are often overlooked in production art terms because they're relatively simple images drawn en masse, but don't underestimate their importance in planning productions. You'll rarely – if ever – get it right first time, so don't beat yourself up. Just look on any changes as the next step. And remember: story, story, story!

#### 6 MY CREATIVE PROCESS

Until recently I used to draw with pencil or pen on plain paper, then scan images in and cut and paste in Photoshop to create page layouts. This meant I always had an original image to work from. Now I work straight into the computer on a Cintiq in Photoshop to create a line drawing, often on a layer over my original thumbnail with simple tone laid on to give form and atmosphere. I use Bridge, which enables me to re-order individual frames quickly before producing a page layout PDF. This is useful when the film edit changes.



#### 7 A STYLE FOR ALL OCCASIONS

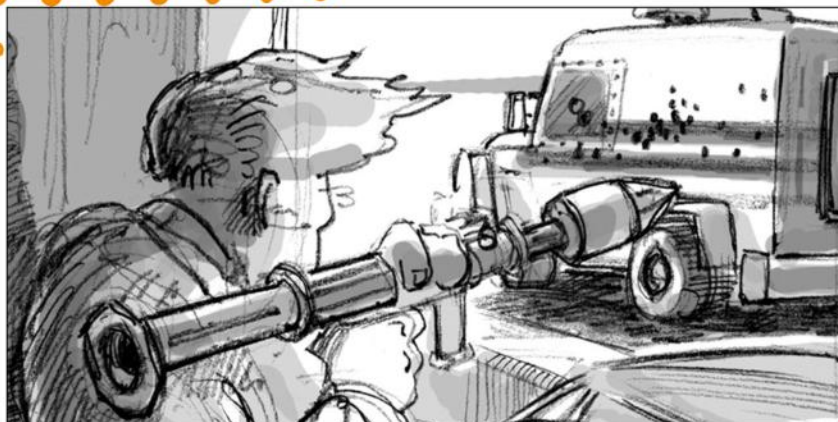
There are many styles of storyboard art, and none are right or wrong – it's just a case of what suits the occasion. The frustration comes when frames you like or consider the best at telling the story suddenly get cut or have to be redrawn in two days! Often the time at your disposal dictates how basic or refined the panels are: when a 200-frame sequence needs to be drawn in a day or so, the degree of finish must suffer...

#### 8 DO THE BEST YOU CAN

...and as a consequence I often end up hating my work. I see the mistakes and inadequacies, the flaws in the rendering or possible gaps in the storytelling brought about by input from other people and changes owing to last-minute revisions. It's sometimes hard to step back and let them go when they have your name on them and are representative of what you do. There's no disclaimer on the page saying that the sequence was drawn in two days, or that you were working on these panels into the small hours. They are what they are, so try to exercise some quality control over all that you do.







## 9 DRAWING FOR CAMERA

Composition is a fundamental part of storyboarding, but this isn't as easy as it might first appear: there are several things that have to be considered. What's the information I need to convey? Is it geography, atmosphere, action, movement or emotion? All of these things influence the way the panel is drawn and where the camera is placed to shoot the picture.



## 10 SET UP THE SEQUENCE

The discipline is based on composing shots that are aesthetically interesting and convey information. If shots clash with other shots then a sequence becomes disjointed and the story grows difficult to follow. Shots must work together to guide the audience.



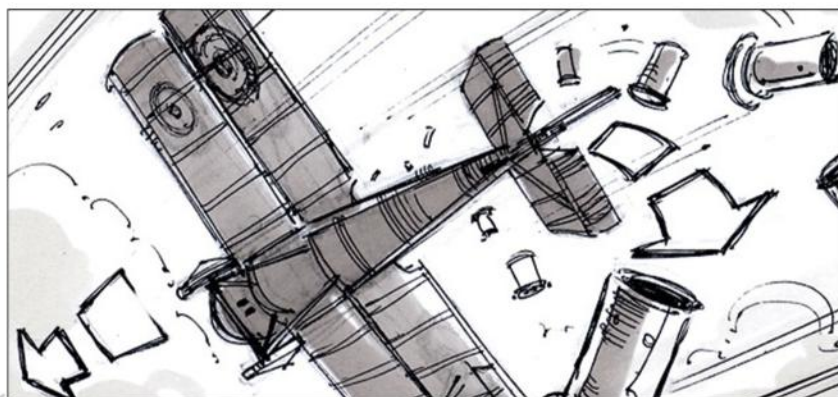
## 11 THE BIGGER PICTURE

Wide shots help to set the scene. They give the audience a mass of information in a short space of time: the location, where things are in relation to one another, the time of day, and so on. These are the broad strokes, and once they're in place we can work on fleshing the story out in greater detail.



## 12 WHO'S DOING WHAT?

Establishing direction is vital. If we see our hero moving right to left then we must retain that direction of travel until we can cut out to show a change, either by cutting to a head-on or angle from directly behind or by moving the camera, tracking around the figure.



## 13 WORK HIGH AND LOW

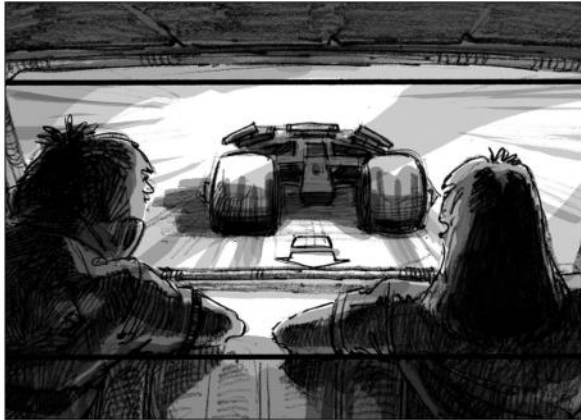
The height and angle from which we view any action can go a long way to creating atmosphere and building tension. If the camera is low the audience feels vulnerable and everything else in shot looks threatening. Conversely, if it's high we're looking down on everything, which gives strength to a point of view and has the effect of making objects in shot look smaller and therefore weaker.



## 14 GET IN CLOSE

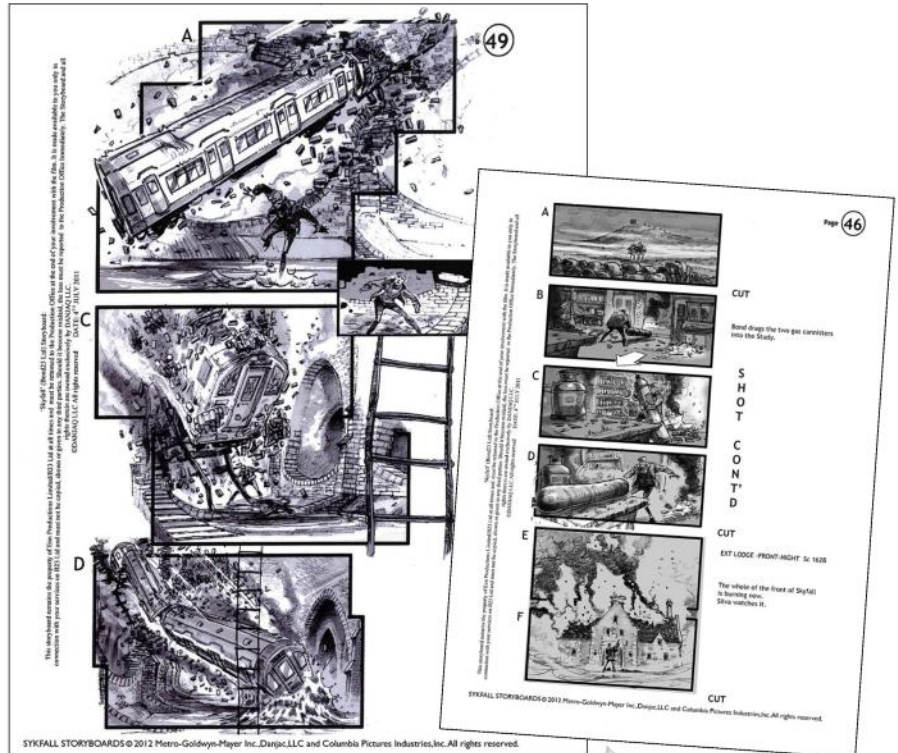
Close-ups help show emotion and build tension. Shots of the face, the eyes, the way a hand moves or fingers twitching all give us important information about the characters in the shot. The audience will know how they're feeling and how they may react.





## 15 LIGHT AND SHADE

Lighting plays a fundamental part in composition of shots. It helps distinguish depth, and we can play action out in hard shadow or pools of light, in silhouette or broad sunlight. Would the scene benefit from an air of mystery, or are there any theatrical devices or set pieces that give us an excuse for an interesting lighting setup?



## 16 DANCING WITH THE ACTION

Drawing action is difficult. Knowing where to put the camera to cover the kicks, hits and explosions comes with practice. Think of it in terms of a dance: the camera moving in rhythm to the fight, jumping between punches, cutting from impact to reaction. Use wider shots for coverage, closer shots to show impacts and convey the brutality and pain. The same action will often be covered by several cameras from different positions, which reduces the number of times it may be necessary to repeat the stunt and gives the director multiple views to cut between in the edit. This needs to be reflected in your storyboards.



## 17 CONVEY MOVEMENT

The different marks you make give a greater sense of movement and texture within the frame. Speed lines make the car appear to be moving. Lift it clear of the road and suddenly it's travelling at speed. Blur the background and now we're rocking!

## 18 SERVE THE STORY...

All these different elements help with the telling of the story. When combined effectively they guide the viewer through the scene – playing, teasing, informing, sometimes tricking but always helping the director to manipulate the audience and tell the story to maximum effect. Yes, it's fun being a pencil monkey! **END**

### PRO SECRETS

#### BODY TALK

Practise anatomy and perspective, because without them your boards will be flat and lifeless. If you can draw the human form with a decent degree of realism, then you can draw anything.





Photography by Tyler Q Tucker



GET YOUR  
RESOURCES  
SEE PAGE 146

PENCIL

ACRYLICS

INK

PHOTOSHOP

# INK AND COLOUR A COMIC COVER

**CHRIS VISIONS** shows how to compose an image in your sketchbook using value, pencilling and inking, then colouring with both traditional inks and Photoshop

**F**or years I was intimidated by working digitally. Something about the plastic nib on a plastic surface felt too jarring to me. I love the sway of a brush on paper too much, the pop of the ink from a pen nib – there's a romance in traditional work that I can't separate myself from.

Today, Cintiq tablets and Kyle Webster brushes bridge this gap a little more for me, but I still love paper. So here I present you with a process that enables you to keep your traditional connection strong while utilising the power of digital.

I dance back and forth in the beginning, drawing my sketch in my sketchbook, scanning and changing my lines to blue, and then printing it out to give it more detail traditionally again. I encourage you to keep a sketchbook:

## ARTIST INSIGHT HOW TO SOLVE PROBLEMS EARLY ON

Make your thumbnail image as solid as possible, establishing use of dark, medium and light tones to create an interesting composition. Small problems here will only get bigger later, so fix them now.

this is the place where you can hone your skills, play with different paper types and drawing materials, and see how you can lay layers and washes.

Go crazy in your sketchbook and enjoy yourself. You're making art, an act that rewards innovation and the new. Not only do your skills come out in your final pieces, but the fun you have in a piece naturally shines through as well. Learn to enjoy your process, keep that level of excitement high and the skill will come.

Going back to my sketch, you may notice there's no strong mid-tone. This is because I was working a certain way with pen, had an idea in my head on how the lighting would work, and I was itching to start the piece. Be sure to use reference, and use a mid-grey or coloured marker to act as a mid-tone in the layout stage. Your Presto Pen will also be handy in

this stage to mark your light areas as well. That foresight comes from a lot of drawing and a lot of observing.

So, after I've printed out the sketch, it's on to the inking, which I love. This is where you really mould your piece, much like a sculptor. I like to jump around, building up the whole piece, not just focusing one area. This keeps your piece balanced. Working with washes and strong values enables me to build my form, which you'll find guides you throughout your digital colouring and works towards your goal of creating a striking piece.



Chris describes himself as an "art maker and ground shaker" working in the fields of illustration, comics and

wherever the creative wind pushes. Find out more at [www.chrisvisions.com](http://www.chrisvisions.com). ➔









## 1 LAYOUTS AND CONCEPTS

I play with shapes and values on paper to create an interesting composition. I stay loose – sometimes doing literal scribbles, moving my pen around and falling in love with the motion of the marks. Here's a rough one, which enables me to have fun in the inking stage. I like to play with three values: dark, medium and light. This helps to create depth and balance.



### PHOTOSHOP TIP

**ADJUST LEVELS**  
Use the black eyedropper in the Levels panel to quickly set the black point in your image.



## 2 SCAN AND TWEAK

Next I scan in my sketch at 600dpi and print it out larger to save time redrawing the image. First, I take it into Photoshop, scale it to size, and add a layer of Cyan, set to the Lighten or Screen layer blending mode. You'll see a lot of options in your Layers panel that you'll be able to play with in later steps.



### MATERIALS

#### INK

- Sumi ink (black and Chinese red)
- FW Acrylic Artist's Ink (white)
- Homemade ink wash (roughly 10 per cent Sumi/90 per cent water mixture)

#### BRUSHES

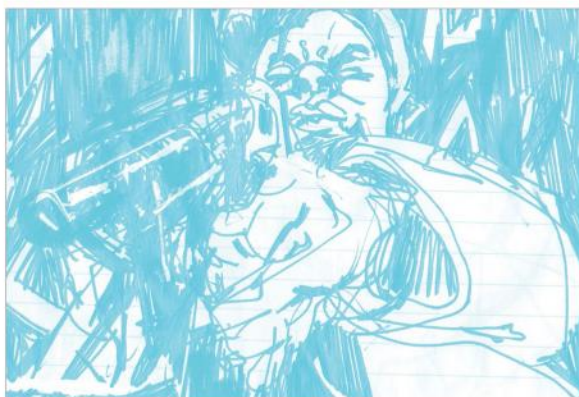
- Sable fine point brush, #2
- Qval wash brush

#### PAPER

- Strathmore Blue Line comic boards or Bristol Paper, heavyweight

#### OTHER

- Presto white-out pens
- Clean water
- Col-Erase blue pencil
- Photoshop



## 3 PRINT YOUR BLUE SKETCH

I use Strathmore Comic Art Boards (100lbs/270gsm) but there are so many options with paper, and it's fun to explore. I mainly use this because of the guidelines, but with a large enough printer you can make your own. The only trouble is that the blue lines sometimes peek through and need an additional clean-up in the digital phase.



## 4 BLUE PENCIL TOUCH-UPS

Now I have a large physical copy of the sketch and can touch up any details. I've been able to retain the energy and looseness in my sketch by working smaller, but now it's about the details. Reference is highly recommended for beginners. Col-Erase Indigo Blue pencils are great: dark enough to see, but light enough not to stain the paper.



## 5 IT'S INKING TIME

This is my favourite part of the process. Here I like to jump around the piece, starting in areas that grab my interest first, going through and moulding my image. I love Sumi Ink, and keep Copic's Super Black in on the side to get those solid black areas. Some people can't stand the smell of Sumi, but I love it, like gasoline or liquorice. It comes in black and Chinese red, which enables you to create areas that can be easily selected in the computer. But more on that later... ➤➤



**ARTIST INSIGHT****KEEP YOUR BRUSH CLEAN**

When transitioning from black to red/white, it's important to have a source of clean water so your colours stay bold and don't become muddy. This helps your values stay strong as well.

**6 WASHES**

My wash is a 40 to 60 per cent grey mixture in tone (0 per cent water, 100 per cent ink), a consistency that enables me to start relatively light, but I can add layers to achieve a darker grey. It's important to know how much water your paper can take, so test, test, test!

**PHOTOSHOP TIP****HUE/SATURATION**

Play with a colour and how it relates to others. A quick shift in colour can transform a piece.

**7 KEEP YOUR VALUES STRONG**

I constantly check my values, trying to not have too much grey and keeping a nice balance of black and white. Contrast is important. Squint at your image and if you can still make out your shapes, it's good. If it loses contrast and focus, punch up black and white areas. I use white-out pens and FW Acrylic ink to resurrect highlights and white areas.

**8 SCANNING IN THE ARTWORK**

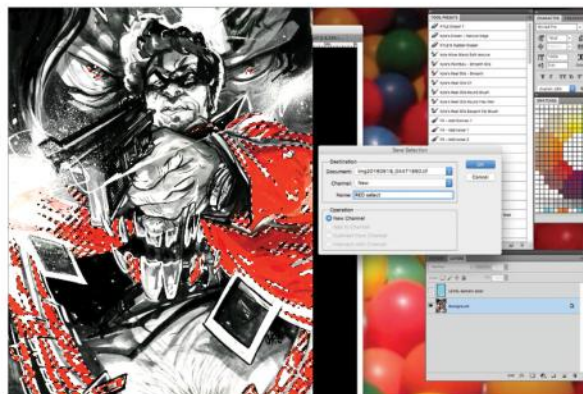
Now I scan in my inked image at 600dpi to capture all those details. I don't mess too much with the settings quite yet – I can do that in Photoshop, where you can fine-tune things a little more accurately. So I open the scan in Photoshop and duplicate the inked art layer. On the original art layer, I start by adjusting the levels (values) and contrast to my liking.

**9 CREATE A TONE LAYER**

On the duplicate layer I exaggerate the dark levels greatly, so the dark range overtakes the piece. I create a new layer, choose a base colour (cyan), and set the layer to Screen mode. Next I merge this layer with the darkened image beneath it, then set this to Multiply. So now I have a cyan layer on top of my inks, creating a cyan wash.







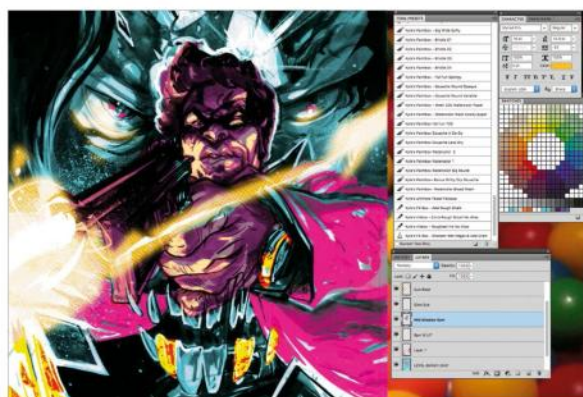
## 10 MAKE SELECTIONS

This is where the red ink comes in handy. I can select those areas using Select > Color Range – the stylus turns into an eyedropper, which makes selecting colour ranges easy. I save selections for later use using Select > Save Selection and name them to cut down on confusion later.



## 11 FLATTING AND LAYER ORDER

Now you can start filling in flat colours and playing with how your shapes lie on top of each other. In the comics industry this is known as flattening. I usually use cyan, magenta and yellow – they are bright and distinct enough that you can easily select them with the Magic Wand. Layer order also enables you to play with how your layers affect each other, depending on the blending mode you use and what's below it.



## 12 FINDING YOUR PALETTE

I like to have a set palette that reflects the mood of the piece, and sometimes I like to just find it. I start to shift Saturation, Lightness and Color using Ctrl+U. Colour is relative – your perception of a colour will change depending on its surroundings. So a lot of the action here is shift, react, shift, repeat. If you feel stuck, search the net for palettes.



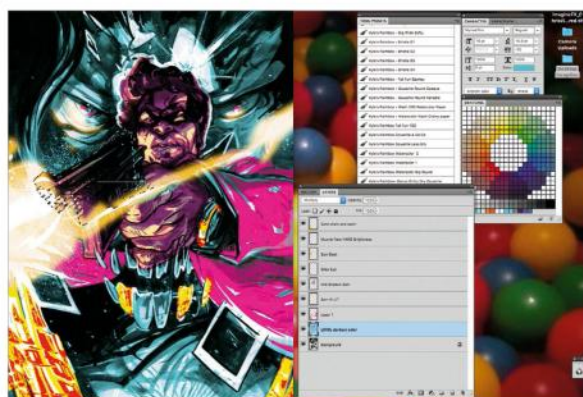
## 13 FINE-TUNE YOUR LIGHTING

Thankfully, with all the work I've done in the traditional stage, my values and lighting are set. But now, it's time to make them sing. I pop them out with Color and Layer options. I want the muzzle flare to be softer, so I select it and go to Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur and adjust. To give it some texture, I go to Filter > Pixelate > Color Halftone.

### ARTIST INSIGHT

#### EXPERIMENT AND ENJOY YOURSELF

My tools change often. This keeps my process exciting. Don't be afraid to pick up new and unfamiliar supplies and test out their boundaries. Have fun making your images – it will come through your piece. Keep a sketchbook handy as well, and go crazy.



## 14 FINAL TOUCHES

Now I save a layered file, and then save a flattened file. Having a layered file enables me to go back to make bigger edits, but if I think the image is pretty much good to go, then now I can flatten and edit the piece as a whole, playing with Color Balance. This makes the piece more cohesive and ready for print. **END**





## PHOTOSHOP

# CREATE DYNAMIC CHARACTERS

**ARTHUR MASK** shows how to create characters with various body types tied together with coherent style and colour. Welcome to Arthur's world!

## Artist PROFILE

**Arthur Mask**  
COUNTRY: Brazil



Arthur learned to draw by himself and his first sketch was a mosquito, when he was just two years old. Nowadays he still draws, but now it's monsters and villains.  
<http://ifxm.ag/a-mask>

**C**reating characters, scenes and stories has always been an immensely pleasurable experience. It's always a lot of fun for me and I never tire of it. My methods of creation are sometimes strange and disorganised when I'm dealing with personal works, and the illustrations almost always change during

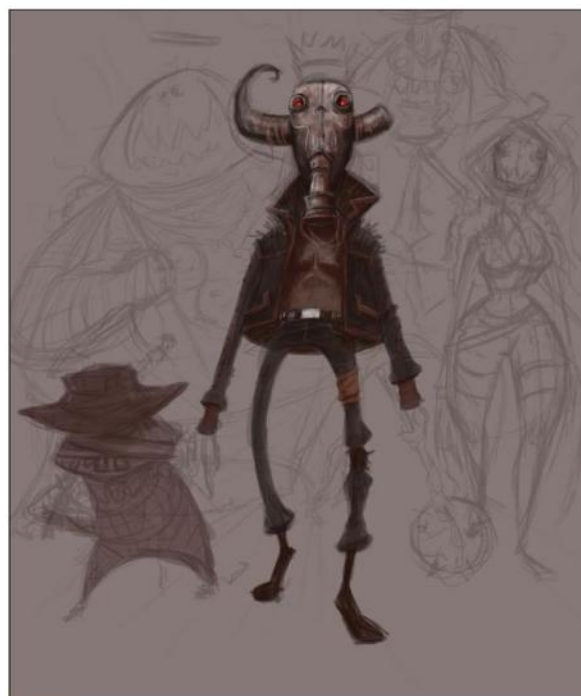
the course of the journey. This applies both to the characters, which often take on a life of their own and grow in directions I hadn't anticipated, and to the atmosphere and colour palette of the whole scene, which can change radically as I try out different hues for the ambient lighting. This in turn influences the colouring of every element in the image.

I create my art using Photoshop in a simple way without using many of the resources it has to offer, such as filters and effects. I use pretty much just a standard brush, always working with Pen Pressure, varying Opacity, along with different layer modes and the Eraser. I apply some texture brushes in certain parts just to produce an effect, but that's about it!



### 1 Initial sketch

In my starting sketch I define the composition and the positions of the characters. I give each a different shape and personality, so the scene will be the most interesting possible and tell a story, directly or indirectly. In the process, I refine the characters. I keep in mind that everything I do at the start can be improved or totally changed by the end.



### 2 First element colours

I start painting one element or character first so that I have a reference point for the rest of the characters and the scene as a whole. I think about whether the colour palette will be hot or cold and more saturated or less, and where the light source will be placed. I always start with a white, neutral light, then mentally make it colder or warmer. ➡

GET YOUR  
RESOURCES  
SEE PAGE 146

VIDEO  
AVAILABLE







**PRO SECRETS****BUILDING A UNIVERSE**

Create characters that generate interest and conflict with each other and will create a good story. Think of each personality, creating appropriate clothing and so on – such details make all the difference. Deconstruct stereotypes. Don't be predictable in your character creation: diversify shapes to build groups of characters with different personalities that complement each other. This will create an interesting composition.

**WORKSHOP BRUSHES****PHOTOSHOP CUSTOM BRUSHES:****BRUSH ARTHUR MASK 01**

I use this brush for just about everything. It's a standard Photoshop brush, altered for use with the Pen tool.

**BRUSH ARTHUR MASK 02**

I use this brush to generate texture in certain areas, implying that the element is organic in nature.

**3 General colour and harmony**

I begin by roughing in the whole scene to test the colour scheme and the harmony between the characters. I always start with a medium colour and then the shadows and highlights. I begin with solid colours only and then add details and other shades of these colours. Then I step back to assess how harmonious and pleasing the scene is.

**4 More details and depth**

After this first colour test I begin to detail and better define a particular element, enhancing its colours. I keep checking that the scene continues to look harmonious as I add more highlights and shadows in order to give more depth and volume to the chosen element.

**5 Adding new textures**

I carry on working character by character, bringing each personality out by adding defining detail and creating spotlights that establish the solidity of the figures. I next start to add new textures in the illustration such as fur, textile patterns and skin.

**6 Redesigning elements**

If a character doesn't come out the way I want, I redo a sketch over the initial element I want to change, providing new features. The illustration doesn't need to always follow a linear pattern of beginning, middle and end. I can always go a step back and rework it to reach a more balanced outcome.

**7 A more effective character**

After my changes, my revised character (the one at the back of the group, wearing a shirt and tie) has become more compact. Previously, a hat gave him longish lines, but after the redesign he's more harmonious and charismatic; the Mickey Mouse ears fit in better with his companions. They also give him more personality.

**8 Background colour**

At this point, I choose the general background colour, which enables me to start to define the tone of the light that will affect all the colours of the characters and other elements. This provides an overall atmosphere, giving a dramatic look to the scene and establishing some sense of context for it.



## 9 Ambient light effect

I add the ambient atmosphere that will interact with the colours of the characters, placing them in the scene hierarchically and separating planes, adding distance between background and characters. I next add hints of the background colour to various elements, making the scene more convincing. Initially I test it on the central figure in the foreground and then apply it to the rest. ➡

**SHORTCUTS**  
**Vary brush size**  
 J or [ when brush is selected (PC & Mac)  
 A quick and easy way to increase or decrease your brush size while painting.







## 10 More ambient light

Picking up the ambient light colour doesn't just tie things together – it can also be used to enhance contrast and sculpt the forms through careful placement of stronger or lighter tones of the ambient light on the characters. Then I refine the details in textures and materials and make the ambient light interact throughout.



## 11 Review and add more illustration

I don't necessarily follow a linear process during the creation of an illustration – it's something that keeps evolving. You need to develop a method that you feel comfortable working with and gives you the expected result no matter how many times you change things. Keep revising and improving until it looks the way you want.

### SHORTCUTS

#### Zoom in and out

Cmd+ and Cmd- (Mac)

Ctrl+ and Ctrl- (PC)

Switch quickly between a close view of details and a handy overview of your canvas.



## 12 Angle of light

I also think of each job as a study piece, a way to improve and to ensure that I'm always evolving as an artist. I work on the contrast in the colours of the background and the shadows that affect the characters. I draw a light from above that falls on the characters, so that all the light comes from the same point.



### PRO SECRETS

#### STUDY!

Always look around you, and look at how the light behaves. Study anatomy, but use reference only for studies and for stimulating your imagination. Don't be afraid to defy common sense. Don't be lazy – draw, get intimate with pencils, brush, tablet or whatever is needed and whatever you enjoy working with.



## 13 More details and corrections

At this point, I refine the details on the clothes of the characters, adding buckles, belts, elements of pop culture, necklaces, scars, scratches and textures in shades of blood, tissue textures and details like the rat stole on the female character. I correct and refine the anatomy, fixing the leg on that character, and add details such as the knee pad.

## 14 Finishing touches

I add the final details, fixing some stray brush strokes. To refine the image as a whole, I add a more sketch-style finish in certain areas and draw some more scribbly lines on the background. As a finishing touch I add some personal style details, such as a crown and a halo, sometimes skulls, speech balloons with symbols, and the piece is done. **END**



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## PHOTOSHOP

# GIVE HARLEY QUINN A REALISTIC LOOK

Learn how to use realism to emphasise a comic villain's naughty side, with **ADMIRA WIJAYA'S** delicious take on the Batman adversary

## Artist PROFILE

**Admira Wijaya**  
LOCATION: Indonesia



Admira has been creating comic and concept art for over eight years. At the moment he's busy creating covers for Dark Horse Comics' Conan the Barbarian.  
<http://ifxm.ag/admira-w>

**T**o me, the appeal of painting digitally is simple. Unlike with traditional media, I can create a piece of art without waiting for the paint to dry!

In my early days of working digitally, I had plenty of fun trying to get to grips with the software and while I explored more about digital media, it was also interesting and challenging. I also worked using traditional media, which made it easier for me to understand what to do with digital art software.

I'm still trying to improve myself and especially ways to get my illustration done in the fastest way – by applying different digital methods, and by experimenting with different layers and effects.

I've learned a lot from online tutorials and got some tips from magazines, which makes me more curious to practise with new techniques. Many of these tutorials are from ImagineFX, which always has plenty of workshops and beautiful artwork from great artists from all around the world, and it makes me so inspired.

Mistakes will always happen along the way, but I enjoy the process. Sometimes the computer crashes while I'm producing artwork, because the memory is over capacity. That can be painful, but it works out in the end when a client is satisfied with the result and I get paid enough to buy a new computer!

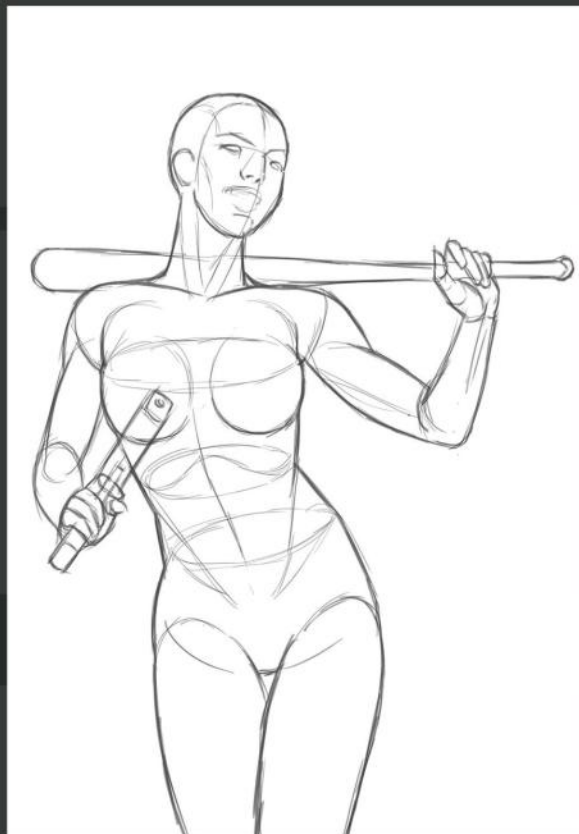
So don't be scared to make mistakes, and be prepared to go through some artistic pain. It will ease in time, and then you can look back at what you've been through... and smile. Enjoy the journey!

  
GET YOUR  
RESOURCES  
SEE PAGE 146

## PRO SECRETS

### BE PREPARED TO EXPERIMENT

Don't settle for using just a few tried and tested digital art processes. You might find that a new technique gives you a better and faster way of creating your art. Some day you can be proud of the results you've produced and share them with the world.



## 1 THE INITIAL IDEA

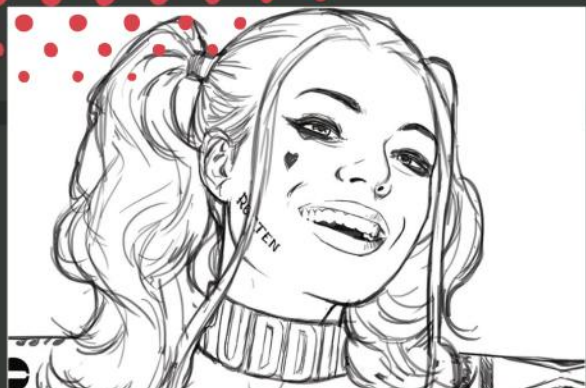
I already have an idea of how to pose Harley Quinn – it's pretty much what you see here. It's always hard at the start to decide on a pose, so I draw out a couple of options, then choose the best. I place the rough sketch on a default layer in Photoshop with a white background,



## 2 BUILD UP THE LINES

From the rough, on the same layer, I start to build up the lines. For this process I use Photoshop's default hard Round brush. I draw what is needed for now, and add some relevant detail. But I also try to maintain the composition's mood and momentum, into the next step... ➔





### 3 CLEANING THINGS UP

I add a new layer on top of the overlapping line art, and then place the original rough sketch above that layer, which makes it easier to edit if there are any mistakes in the process. Next I start to clean up the lines, by tracing exactly along my original drawing of Harley Quinn.

### 4 BACKGROUND CONSIDERATIONS

After finishing the character line work, it's on to the background. I introduce a grid for a strong perspective and add more layers behind the figure, to ensure the background is clear enough to make her stand out. I'm portraying her standing in a subway, bruised and bloody but victorious. Her enemies' bodies are just out of shot.

#### SHORTCUTS

##### Liquify

Cmd+Shift+X (Mac)

Ctrl+Shift+X (PC)

Make quick adjustments to elements of your image with this cool filter.

#### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

##### PHOTOSHOP CUSTOM BRUSHES:

##### CANVAS 001

Good for developing a painterly look, and for smooth blending.

##### CANVAS 0

I use this when I feel the artwork needs a canvas effect.

##### CANVAS

I use this to make the background appear like canvas.

##### CANVAS 2

I use this brush on the background to enhance the effect of the Canvas brush.

##### HAIR BRUSH

I paint delicate, smooth hair with this brush.



### 5 APPLYING COLOUR

Now for some colour foundation. I add a new layer again below the line art and the background layer, ready for some rough colours. I start with Harley. Using the hard Round brush, I place some colour, working out where the light comes from and how much brightness I'll need. This will help when I render (add final detail to) the character.



### 6 LIGHTING THE SCENE

Next I roughly colour the background. Adding a new layer below the background line, I use the Gradient tool to quickly introduce a dark to light gradation. Then I paint a light source – not the main one, just a secondary source – which gives a certain mood to the character and will help explain the ambient colour in the finished piece.





## 7 ENHANCING THE FACE

Now I start rendering Harley's face. I use a soft Round brush for a smoother touch and my custom brush called Canvas 001, which gives the artwork a more painterly look and helps me blend areas delicately. I change the eyes a little, aiming to create more impact with the viewer. This sort of change can be done whenever you want around the rendering stage, really.



## 8 RENDERING THE CHARACTER

I continue to render the whole character, for now not worrying about the tattoos that are visible on the line art. I can sort them out later after the whole rendering process is done. I still use the same brush for rendering the character.



## 9 DON'T LOSE DETAILS

I realise I need to take more care when rendering my character. Because Harley Quinn is the subject, I have to be careful with tone, mid-tone and shadow. A heavy hand and my character will suffer in darker areas, causing a loss of image detail. A delicate use of mid-tones is crucial during these final painting stages.



## 10 FINAL TOUCHES

Now it's time to render the background. In this case, I use marble and granite textures to lift the mood a little. Some details have to be fixed, and I paint over some unnecessary line work. I fix and clarify the background, and finally add some lens flare effect and dust textures, to increase visual interest. **END**

### PRO SECRETS

#### WORK TO A PLAN

Mistakes always occur during the painting process, so don't be afraid of making them. Furthermore, take the time to put together a plan or some simple guidelines for how you're going to approach a project. Then, if you make a mistake, you should be able to retrace your steps and get back on course.



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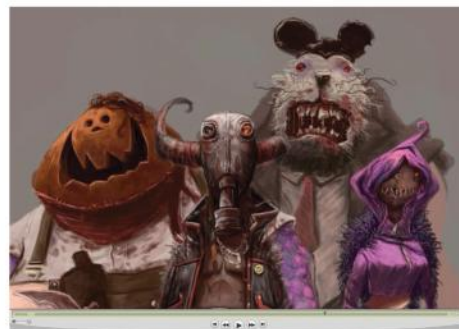
## Use insect designs

Tony Foti takes inspiration from natural forms to create striking alien spacecraft designs



## Paint a girl and her tank

Brett Parson presents his take on the iconic Tank Girl in Sketchbook Pro and Photoshop



## Create great characters

Arthur Mask concepts characters with varied body types tied together with style and colour



## Caricature Hellboy

Jean-Baptiste Monge produces his unique interpretation of a younger, cuter Hellboy



## Draw more varied faces

Tom Foster explores anatomy and proportion to help you depict distinct facial types



## Use classic colours

Tom Foster shares his secrets for giving comic art a bold, eye-catching colour scheme



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## PLUS

**FINAL  
ARTWORK  
& CUSTOM  
BRUSHES**



**You're three steps away from your workshop files**

**1** Type this directly into your browser's address bar (not search):  
**<http://ifxm.ag/com3art>**

**2** Workshop resources from this special issue are organised according to tutorial name.

**3** Download what you need, and learn from our workshop artists!





“My custom Canvas brush gives my artwork a more painterly look and helps me blend areas delicately”

Admira Wijaya,  
page 142

#### CUSTOM BRUSHES!

*Yours free! Many of our workshop artists share their custom brushes for Photoshop or other apps, so you can emulate their styles and techniques for yourself!*

#### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

##### PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:

##### CANVAS 001

Good for developing a painterly look, and for smooth blending.

##### CANVAS 0

I use this when I feel the artwork needs a canvas effect.

##### CANVAS

I use this to make the background appear like canvas.

##### CANVAS 2

I use this brush on the background to enhance the effect of the Canvas brush.

##### HAIR BRUSH

I paint delicate, smooth hair with this brush.



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WORKSHOPS  
INSIDE!



## COMIC ART GALLERY

From line art  
covers to fan  
art favourites



FIRE IT UP!

## HELLBOY CARICATURE

Learn the key steps to  
creating this painting

### CORE SKILLS

Master essential tools and  
options of SketchBook Pro

### CONAN THE BARBARIAN

Explore the rich history of Conan  
comics with artists past and present

### STORYTELLING TIPS

Lewis LaRosa explains his surefire  
approach to layout and narrative

## FIONA STAPLES

The Saga creator  
talks about her  
past and future